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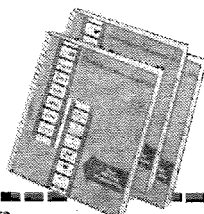
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In *Screen* v 15 nn 1 and 2 we published an article by Charles Barr on Ealing Studios: 'Projecting Britain and the British Character'. Charles Barr provided a thematic analysis of the studio's output under Michael Balcon, particularly as expressed, with individual variations, in the films of the main directors to work there. He showed, however, that these films were the product of a much wider group than the directors, the studio's 'creative elite', and that the thematic complex reflects the 'total social and cultural climate' in Britain at the time. In this number, John Ellis approaches Ealing's output during the same period from another angle. He shows how the relations of production at Ealing studios, that is, the technical and financial conditions, the organisation of labour, the available aesthetic instrumentarium, ensured the elite's control over the product until it entered into distribution, and how the meanings they intended to convey in the films reflected their class position. However, as John Ellis points out, a text once released into circulation escapes the control of its immediate producers, the domination they were able to exercise over the production process. The readers of a text may impose their own readings, and the readers in the case of the popular cinema come largely from other classes than the Ealing elite. But for all that, the reader is not 'free' to invent his or her own reading of the film. A reading which may not be that of the makers imposes itself on the reader, it has a force which cannot simply be denied. This is true even if the reading finally accepted is not the one spontaneously experienced; it is by its force that the reader judges the reading of the critic or his or her own re-reading.

It is at this point that classical semiotics breaks down as an approach to the study of the text, including the film text. Despite the insistence of the tradition that stems from Saussure on an irreducible core of arbitrariness in the sign, this arbitrariness tends to be seen as an agreed convention at the social level, imposed arbitrarily on the individual, not on the *conscience collective*. Aesthetic semiotics, concerned with motivated signs, is even more bound to regard aesthetic codes as self-evident conventions, or else as freely chosen by the reader (ie the critic-semiotician) or imposed by decision groups whose power of imposition remains undefined. Classical semiotics is restricted to a rigorous description of a reigning system of signification, accepted as given, in force; it cannot explain this *force* of signs, the energies it presupposes, or the construction of the point established by this force as the point from which the description is made, the point of interpretation – that is, the construction of the subject. Hence the concern, expressed in *Screen* and elsewhere, to re-cast semiotics in a frame-

- 6 work defined by psychoanalysis, for psychoanalysis is precisely a theory of the symbolic system as imposed on the human animal in its construction into a subject, and the dynamics and economics that imposition and construction imply.

In the next number of *Screen* we plan to discuss these issues at greater length, in particular their implications for the study of the cinema. Meanwhile, Stephen Heath's article, the first part of which we publish in this number, provides an example of a reading which takes these developments into account. A Hollywood film which, despite certain stylistic eccentricities, remains in the classical tradition of cinematic narrative is described using codes established by Christian Metz among others, but the purpose is not to provide a more correct or 'scientific' description than either the naive self-evident plot summary or the critical 'interpretation' can provide – on the contrary, a number of both types of coding are incorporated into the material to be analysed. Rather the reading seeks out the resistances implied by the imposition of these codes, traces of the work narration presupposes but denies. Stephen Heath's article is thus an extension of a tradition of work on the American narrative cinema exemplified by the *Cahiers du cinéma* study of *Young Mister Lincoln* (*Screen* v 13 n 3) and Raymond Bellour's examination of the Bodega Bay sequence from *The Birds* (unpublished translation by the Educational Advisory Service of the BFI).

BEN BREWSTER

Acknowledgement. The translation of Raymond Bellour: 'The Obvious and the Code' in *Screen* v 15 n 4, Winter 1974/5, was by Diana Matias.

The special event at this year's Edinburgh International Film Festival is to be a series of screenings and seminars organised by the editorial board of *Screen* on the theme *Brecht and the Cinema/Film and Politics*. The topic is divided into three areas: Brecht's own work in the cinema, the contemporary revolutionary film as an application of Brechtian dramaturgy, and the influence of Brecht on the British cinema. Films to be screened include *Kuhle Wampe*, *The Threepenny Opera* and *Hangmen also Die* in the first area; *Tout va bien*, *History Lesson* and *Dear Summer Sister* in the second; and *Sparrows Can't Sing*, *O Lucky Man!* and *The Gangster Show* in the third. The event will take place from August 25th to 30th. Details can be obtained from Lynda Myles, Edinburgh International Film Festival, 3 Randolph Crescent, Edinburgh EH3 7TJ.

Film and System: Terms of Analysis Part I

Stephen Heath

The following piece has nothing definitive about it; it is offered for discussion in an area – the analysis of film – where, for a variety of reasons, little of real importance has yet been achieved. The sole ambition here is to pose something of the terms of that analysis, understanding by ‘terms’ not so much a set of rigorously defined concepts as a series of moments, of problems encountered: what is given is, as it were, an analysis in progress, in the process of the construction – in response to its object – of method and concept. Hence the effect of its organisation, the constant doubling back over a number of centres, a spiral of preoccupations rather than a straight exposition. For reasons of length, moreover, the piece has had to be separated from the theoretical and methodological considerations which form its conclusion.

An initial version of the analysis was developed in the course of a seminar on film theory held in November 1974 and I am grateful to the participants for their attention and guidance. Thanks are also due to the Slade Film Unit and to Nicky North and Lez Cooke of the BFI Educational Advisory Service for their considerable material help.

I

This text is devoted to the analysis of a single film. To say that, however, is to raise questions as to the nature and purpose of such an analysis and, in order to avoid misunderstanding, it is necessary from the outset to attempt to answer, or at least to delimit, certain of these.

The analysis has two determining aims: firstly, it seeks to describe the functioning of a single filmic system (‘functioning’ might be stressed immediately: the aim is not, even were this

8 theoretically conceivable, to provide an exhaustive account of the meaning of the film but to indicate its movement, the logic of its production); secondly, *in so doing*, it seeks to examine and work through some of the problems surrounding 'film analysis' (the reading of films), and to introduce and discuss, provisionally, one or two theoretical concepts of use in the resolution of those problems (and in the description of the functioning of the particular filmic system under consideration). These aims form the scope of the analysis and their realisation contains within that scope general issues concerning the articulation of semiotics and psychoanalysis and then the importance of that articulation for historical materialism.

It is easy enough to suggest at once that these issues crystallise round the instance of the subject and the process of construction-reconstruction, the shifting regulation of maintenance. The notion of a shifting regulation is moreover, as will be seen, fundamental to the practice of film: movement held and checked in the diegetic space, an activity of *reconstitution*. It is here that the materialist articulation of semiotics and psychoanalysis and its appearance within the scope of the analysis of film become clearer. Reconstitution is the relation across the instance of the subject between the primary regulation (the construction of the individual subject) and the definition of this construction in specific signifying practices, its reconstruction or replacement, where 'replacement' means not merely the repetition of the place of that construction but also, more difficultly, the supplacement – the overplacement: supplementation or, in certain circumstances, supplantation (critical interruption) – of that construction in the place of its repetition, a refiguration of the subject. It is precisely the figure of the subject as turning-point (circulation) between image and industry (poles of the cinematic institution) which demands study in the analysis of films. The hypothesis, in short, is that ideology depends crucially on the establishment of a range of 'machines' (of institutions) which move – transference of desire – the subject ('sender' and 'receiver') in a ceaseless appropriation of the symbolic into the imaginary, production into fiction. In film, it is narrative that has served as the mode of that appropriation, the very mirror of the instance of the subject in its reconstitution.

Thus the general issues mentioned above come together in the terms of this present analysis, which endeavours to elucidate the activity of film from the demonstration of the functioning of a particular filmic system; a demonstration which may be called semiotic if one understands by that an attention not simply to the *énoncé* (the accepted field of linguistics and of semiology in its initial forms) but equally to the *énonciation* and the frictions of the two (such an attention being the necessary basis for the posing of semiotics within materialism and focussing the pivotal position of psychoanalysis as, exactly, 'materialist theory of language' in

this respect). What is in question is not the proposal of a meaning – a film can always be seized pertinently under a variety of readings; reference will be made to some of those given for this film without in any sense attempting to ‘refute’ them; the point is not to wage a war of interpretations; rather, it is a matter of showing the *design* of the film in its system (the ambiguity of the word is not without value: the concern is with the organisation of the film in its effects, its positions). The filmic system is the film as moving theatre; the interest here is in that production and its productions, its assignation of readings, and then in the shifts between the two, their ‘overturning’.

These preliminary remarks have leant somewhat haphazardly on expressions which need to be clearly distinguished in their usage. By ‘film’ is meant the given unit of discourse, the individual work (notions that are, of course, immediately problematic: what determines and defines the given unity? the finition of the work? – the answer hinges on the achievement of homeostasis, the enclosure of, precisely, the *work* of the film back onto itself in a perfect whole, the film as ‘work’; modern cinema in so far as it operates as ‘deconstruction’ is the problematisation of this idea of the film: think, to take a simple example, of the extensibility of Rivette’s *Out 1* and the play between it and the shorter version, *Spectre*). This usage, which is that of everyday speech (since, as a result of the dominant modes of realisation and consumption, to talk of film is to talk of specified units, works with titles), evidently contains two areas of reference which, though shading into one another, can be separated out if required: on the one hand, the film as text engaging the action of reception (‘I saw a good film last night’); on the other, the film taken more in its materiality as object (‘the film was made in just under three months’). In cases where confusion might arise, the former will be specified by use of the term ‘filmic text’. ‘Filmic system’ is employed to refer to the particular film (filmic text) in the activity of its production, its work. Defined in this way, the concept of filmic system approaches Metz’s definition of the singular or textual system of a film – ‘Every film has its particular structure, which is an overall organisation, a network in which everything holds together, in short a system; but this system is valid only for the one film; it is a configuration resulting from various choices, as from a certain combination of the elements chosen’ (*Langage et cinéma*, Paris 1971, p 46; now translated as *Language and Cinema*, The Hague 1974, p 63) – yet keeps the distance of a stress on structuration rather than structure, on the functioning of the film as activity of systematisation producing a number of systems and partial systems rather than as product of an overall structure of organisation (it has to be said that Metz’s definition

- 10 brought with it, via the concept of 'filmic writing', crucial notions of operation and displacement and that he currently envisages this problem in terms of textual systematicity as opposed to those of a textual system). All of which is not to deny the effort of classic cinema towards homogeneity (such an effort, indeed, might well be taken as the fundamental trait of that cinema), but, just as narrative never exhausts the image, homogeneity is always an *effect* of the film and not the filmic system, which is precisely the production of that homogeneity. Homogeneity is haunted by the material practice it represses and the tropes of that repression, the forms of continuity, provoke within the texture of the film the figures – the edging, the margin – of the loss by which it moves; permanent battle for the resolution of that loss on which, however, it structurally depends, mediation between image and discourse, narrative can never contain the whole film which permanently exceeds its fictions. 'Filmic system', therefore, always means at least this: the 'system' of the film in so far as the film is the organisation of a homogeneity *and* the material outside inscribed in the operation of that organisation as its contradiction. Finally, by 'cinematic institution' is understood, after Metz, the double machine of cinema as industry and ideological apparatus to the extent to which the former depends on the effect of the latter, on, that is, the metapsychological realisation of a placing of subjectivity that determines – renews – the circulation of capital, cinema being nothing less than a massive investment in the subject.

These terminological clarifications lead on to a further question, that of the range of the generalisations given here concerning cinema and film (all films? some films?). The analysis sketched out in what follows is of one film, an American film made in Hollywood in the 1950's for one of the important companies, and the range may therefore be specified as that of classic narrative cinema. Such a specification does not, however, in any way pre-judge the issue of three important points: 1. that between this single film and the remarks towards the characterisation of classic narrative cinema there may not be a great many distinctions and qualifications to be made ('classic narrative cinema' has here the status of a model; no individual film is that model – in Hollywood itself, the problem was always one of variation, the refashioning of the same); 2. that the remarks may not in respect of certain topics have a generality beyond that of classic narrative cinema; 3. that the remarks may not have something to say, as it were in counterpoint, about a modern cinema working against this model. Those points can be grasped in the procedure of the analysis; its strategies and difficulties, its connections and its hesitations, are focussed round the very use of the notion of filmic system with its response in the term 'system' to the aim of homogeneity in classic narrative film and its simultaneous attempt to seize that homogeneity in the logic of its production, to seize the film as

II

The film for analysis is *Touch of Evil* directed by Orson Welles, for Universal and released in 1958. Leaving aside material factors of availability, several reasons led to the choice of this film; most notably, the original intuition (the feeling) of an extremely openly coded film – an obviousness of systems: from, say, the straightforward adoption of stock modes of continuity transition or the simple coding of shot angles into one or two dramatically available systems to the easy ‘difficulty’ of the various elements that go to make up the signature ‘Welles’ (‘baroque’, ‘expressionism’, ‘chiaroscuro’ – the usual terms for that mixture of effects of depth of focus, 18.5 distortion, lighting, composition in frame, etc) – constantly rendered oblique, overturned; the impression of a filmic system in which the narrative was constantly deflected, out of true. Coupled with this, and with the pleasure it involved, was the accessibility with which the film focussed the imbrication of a number of determinations – narrative order, author style, star weighting, ideological message, technical accomplishment – such accessibility-imbrication being itself a factor in the open/oblique movement.

It is essential, for the intelligibility of the analysis, to have a clear grasp of the action of the film and to this end a synopsis will be given, together with a certain amount of subsidiary information relating to ‘credits’. By definition, the synopsis is a narrative outline, the statement of a kind of ideal entity – the narrative (the diegesis, the story) – that can be realised in a range of matters of expression (technically, indeed, the synopsis precedes the film, is as it were the idea on which the film is sold); what it retains is the set of macro-functions (the main ‘points’ of the action) and, where pertinent (ie narratively relevant), occasional traits of character or scene. In a sense, the synopsis produces an initial message of the film (a level of denotation) as condition of a secondary message, the film’s ‘theme’ or, precisely, its ‘meaning’, and the specific modes of realisation then come back into the argument at this stage as ‘style’ (a pattern which is enshrined in the very lay-out of the reviews in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*). Conventionally, there is agreement over the first level (mistakes are decidable); the debate is about meaning and takes place at the second level.

The problem for this analysis of a filmic system is that it is just this convention, this division of the film, which is unacceptable; to study the filmic system is to construct a new object, to specify different divisions in the analysis: one might say quickly that in this perspective there is always a multiplicity of narratives (in-

- 12 cluding those of the narration) and that it is the figures of the multiplicity that are crucial. Which is to conclude that synopsis here is an intolerable necessity (the paradox holding the movement, the friction, with which the analysis is concerned): intolerable because it has to be tolerated against the grain of the film; necessity because it answers to the 'intolerance' of the film itself, the mode of its use of narrative.

Practical difficulties remain even then. The conventional agreement mentioned above masks the inevitable (outside perhaps of a rigorous formalisation, a narrative calculus) confusion of synopsis and interpretation, the latter the control of the former with mistakes as the symptoms of interference; when we are told, for instance, that 'Welles' ageing detective in *Touch of Evil* . . . is sure he knows who committed the crime (although he is wrong)' – M Wood; 'Orson Welles', *Cambridge Review*, October 1974, p 5 – though a character at the end of the film stresses that '[Quinlan's] famous intuition was right after all . . . the kid confessed about that bomb, so, turns out Quinlan was right after all . . .' – we can be sure, in turn, that we touch the very pressure of this control. Thus four synopses are provided in the present case: a minimal account, something like an answer to the question 'what's it about?', the narrative 'image' of the film; two variants or extensions of that common account, taken from books on Welles; most importantly, a working description of the action of the film according to the actual sequence of the narration of events in the film, the description being given in numbered sections in order to facilitate later reference.

1.

During a murder investigation in a border town, Quinlan, the American detective in charge, is discovered by Vargas, a Mexican official, to have planted evidence framing the chief suspect. Despite attacks on his wife culminating in Quinlan's attempt to frame her for a murder he himself commits, Vargas manages to expose the crooked policeman.

2.

'The scenario opposes an old and unscrupulous policeman convinced of the guilt of a suspect and an upright young official who tries to bring him down. His back against the wall, Quinlan (the policeman) defends himself by mounting an abominable blackmail plot against the latter's wife. Vargas (the official) only manages to extricate himself by recording a conversation between Quinlan and his best friend. The action takes place in a small town on the border between Mexico and the USA' (André Bazin: *Orson Welles*, Paris 1972, p 115).

3.

'The investigation of a drugs crime on the border between the United States and Mexico is placed in the hands of a certain inspector Quinlan. Quinlan has no hesitation in forging evidence against those he believes to be guilty. This he succeeds in doing in the present case thanks to a local pusher named Grandi, himself under the gravest suspicion in another connection. Both go to extreme lengths to compromise the

Mexican colleague attached to Quinlan, Vargas, and his wife Susan. The latter having been kidnapped and drugged, Quinlan gets rid of his burdensome partner in a hotel room. The plot is discovered by Vargas who finds an unexpected ally in the person of Menzies, Quinlan's friend, who up to then had looked on him as a god but who now with his own hand kills the crooked policeman' (Maurice Bessy: *Orson Welles*, Paris 1963, p 55).

Note: Quinlan is investigating a murder and not a drugs crime; Grandi does not help in the forging of the evidence in that case.

4.

I a Night-time. A bomb is dropped into the boot of a car which then drives through a small border-town (Los Robles), crossing from the Mexican to the American side where it explodes a few seconds later with its two passengers: Rudy Linneker, a wealthy townsman, and Zita, a stripteaser./ b 'Mike' Vargas, a high-ranking Mexican official whose mission is the investigation of narcotics rackets, is honeymooning in Los Robles with his wife Susan. Present when the bomb goes off, they are caught up in the ensuing confusion. Vargas sends Susan back to their hotel on the Mexican side./ c As she returns to the hotel, Susan is accosted by a youth ('Pancho') with a note telling her to follow him for important news concerning her husband./ d At the scene of the explosion, Linneker's daughter, Marcia, is brought to identify her father's body and Captain Hank Quinlan arrives to lead the investigation. There is immediate tension between Quinlan and Vargas over the latter's status given that the explosion happened on American territory./ e As Susan arrives with Pancho at a hotel on the American side, she is tricked into having her photo taken with him. Inside, she is vaguely threatened by 'Uncle Joe' Grandi, boss of the Grandi 'family' (scattered over both sides of the border) in the absence of his brother whose drugs ring has just been smashed by Vargas and who is due for judgement in a couple of days' time./ f Quinlan conducts a group of collaborators (Sergeant Pete Menzies, his right-hand man, Adair, the District Attorney, Schwartz, an official in the DA's service), together with Vargas, over into Mexico to obtain information on Zita./ g Vargas leaves the group to reassure Susan, now back at their hotel. He catches up again as the group is about to enter the strip-joint but is confronted by a youth (Risto) with a bottle of vitriol. During the struggle, the vitriol misses Vargas and splashes over a poster of Zita. The youth breaks away and Vargas unsuccessfully gives chase./ h In the strip-joint, Quinlan obtains no information and leaves followed by his collaborators. He stops outside at the sound of a pianola and, alone, enters a *maison close* where he encounters Tanya./ i As Vargas returns to the hotel, Susan is being pestered while she changes by a torch beam shone through her window by Pancho from a building opposite. She unscrews the bulb in her room and throws it at her aggressor. Vargas enters and they leave./ j Pancho calls to Risto in the street below that Uncle Joe wants to see him. Risto bolts but is caught by Uncle Joe, furious at the unordered vitriol attack./ k Coming downstairs in the hotel, Vargas is called to the phone concerning the investigation. Outside, Uncle Joe, still angry, sees Vargas and Susan through the glass front of the hotel and sends another of his 'nephews' with an envelope for the latter. Susan takes the envelope which contains the photo of her and Pancho with written on the back 'A souvenir with a million kisses - Pancho'./ l Vargas joins her in the street and she refuses to return to Mexico City while the investigation is being cleared up. It is now dawn and, watched by Uncle Joe, they leave for the motel on the American side of the border where Susan will be able to stay. Uncle Joe leaves in the same direction./ (Here followed a scene, cut by the production company, in which Susan is

- 14 entrusted to Menzies, he driving Susan to the motel while Vargas accompanies Quinlan on the investigation.)

II a At the motel, Susan meets the night clerk and goes to bed./ b Quinlan, Schwartz and Vargas are driven to a construction site belonging to Linneker. Questions are asked about any missing dynamite and about Sanchez, fired by Linneker some months previously for meddling with his daughter and now working as a shoe-salesman. Quinlan recognises Eddie Farnum, an ex-convict. News comes over the car radio that Sanchez has been picked up and is being held at the apartment he shared with Marcia./ c At the apartment, Quinlan begins a long interrogation, convinced that Sanchez and Marcia murdered Linneker for his money, because of his opposition to their liaison. Tension mounts between Vargas and Quinlan as a result of the former's dislike of the treatment being given Sanchez. While washing in the bathroom, Vargas knocks an empty shoe-box from a shelf./ d Vargas leaves to phone Susan from a shop across the street kept by a blind woman. Menzies drives up having taken Susan to the motel accompanied by Grandi who, mistaking him for Vargas as a result of the car, has been tailing him./ e Vargas arrives back in the apartment where the interrogation continues. Quinlan has Menzies search the place and he discovers two sticks of dynamite in the shoe-box in the bathroom. Vargas accuses Quinlan of framing Sanchez and leaves with Schwartz./ f Grandi suggests that Vargas is making trouble and proposes a deal with Quinlan who, leaving Menzies behind, goes off with him for a drink.

III a From the window of her motel room, Susan sees a group of youths arrive in cars./ b Cruising at speed in Vargas' car, Vargas and Schwartz decide to examine records of recent dynamite sales and to check at Quinlan's turkey farm for any evidence of use of dynamite./ c At the motel, the Grandi boys, led by Pancho, have taken over. The night clerk returns and is hustled into a back room. Susan tries to ring the police but Pancho blocks the call and then decides to ring Uncle Joe./ d The phone rings in Uncle Joe's bar where he and Quinlan reach an agreement./ e Susan is again seen distressed in her motel room./ f Schwartz has persuaded the DA and Gould, the Chief of Police, to meet Vargas in the latter's hotel room to listen to the suspicions against Quinlan. Vargas produces the dynamite sales records which include details of a purchase by Quinlan. As they read the document, Vargas tries to phone Susan but the call is stopped by Pancho who claims that she has left orders not to be disturbed./ g In her room, Susan hears whispers concerning drugs coming from the other side of the wall./ h Menzies has found Quinlan more or less drunk in a bar and tries to get him to do something to defend himself against Vargas' accusations./ i Quinlan arrives in the middle of the discussion in Vargas' hotel room and gives back his policeman's badge. Gould and the DA come violently to his defence and Vargas leaves with Schwartz. Quinlan is persuaded to take back the badge and he lets out the accusation that Vargas is himself mixed up in a drugs racket and that Susan is an addict./ j The Grandi boys enter Susan's room./ k The phone rings in Tanya's: Menzies is again trying to track down the whereabouts of Quinlan./ l The boys move round Susan on the bed; as she is grabbed and lifted, the door is pushed shut./ m Menzies discovers Vargas in the Hall of Records looking up details of Quinlan's previous cases. He attempts to tear up Vargas' notes but eventually collapses in despair./ n At the motel, Vargas questions the night clerk as to Susan's movements. It is now night-time. The clerk talks of a wild party. Susan's room is in total disorder and Vargas finds that his gun has been taken. When the clerk reveals that the motel belongs to the Grandi family, Vargas quickly

IV a In a room in the Grandi hotel on the American side, Susan is lying unconscious and undressed on a bed. Sending away two girls from the 'family', Grandi shows Quinlan into the room. Quinlan pulls a gun on Grandi and forces him to telephone Menzies at the police station, asking him to have the vice squad sent round. Quinlan then strangles Grandi and leaves his body hanging over the bed./ b Awaking, Susan rushes screaming onto the fire escape. Vargas drives past in his car but she is unable to make him hear./ c Vargas bursts into the Grandi strip-joint ('Grandi's Rancho Grande') and starts a fight with Pancho and then with Risto. The police arrive and Schwartz tells Vargas that Susan is being held on a murder charge./ d At the police station, Vargas sees Susan in the cells. Menzies shows him Quinlan's cane, found by Grandi's body./ e As Vargas wires up Menzies with a portable microphone-transmitter, Quinlan is inside Tanya's. Menzies gets him out into the street./ f With Vargas hiding alongside them recording their conversation, Quinlan and Menzies walk through a wasteland of oil pumps on the Mexican side. Quinlan acknowledges that he has framed suspects, using Menzies as his tool. He shoots Menzies who in turn shoots him in order to protect Vargas. As the latter is reunited with Susan, Schwartz and Tanya stand looking at Quinlan's body. Tanya leaves.

Note: The segmentation here operates at the level of the narrative signified according to simple criteria of unity of action, unity of characters, unity of place; it has no analytic status other than that of allowing reference to the film as narrative.

Credits:

Shot in 1957 at Universal Studios, Hollywood, and on location at Venice, California. First shown in USA in February 1958.

Production Company—Universal; Producer—Albert Zugsmith; Production Manager—F D Thompson; Director—Orson Welles (additional 'continuity' scenes shot by Harry Keller, a TV director under contract at Universal); Assistant Directors—Phil Bowles, Terry Nelson; Script—Orson Welles (from the novel *Badge of Evil* by Whit Masterson; Welles seems not to have read the novel, but to have adapted an adaptation made by a Universal writer; there are major differences from the novel in narrative, characters, names, locations, etc); Director of Photography—Russell Metty (Metty had previously worked with Welles on parts of *The Magnificent Ambersons* and on *The Stranger*); Editors—Virgil Vogel, Aaron Stell, Orson Welles (Welles cut the picture with Vogel, recut it with Stell but was absent from the final editing); Art Directors—Alexander Goltizen, Robert Clatworthy; Set Directors—Russell A Gausman, John P Austin; Music—Henry Mancini; Musical Supervisor—Joseph Gershenson; Costumes—Bill Thomas; Sound—Leslie I Carey, Frank Wilkinson.

Cast: Hank Quinlan—Orson Welles; Miguel 'Mike' Vargas—Charlton Heston; Susan Vargas—Janet Leigh; Sergeant Pete Menzies—Joseph Calleia; Uncle Joe Grandi—Akim Tamiroff; Pancho—Valentin De Vargas; District Attorney Adair—Ray Collins; Motel Clerk ('Night Man')—Dennis Weaver; Schwartz—Mort Mills; Marcia Linneker—Joanna Moore; Tanya—Marlene Dietrich; Manolo Sanchez—Victor Millan; Risto—Lalo Rios; Gang leader—Mercedes McCambridge; Detective—Joseph Cotten; Strip-joint Madame—Zsa Zsa Gabor (both Zsa Zsa Gabor and Marlene Dietrich are described in the film's opening credits as 'Guest Stars'); Blaine—Phil Harvey; Blonde—Joi Lansing;

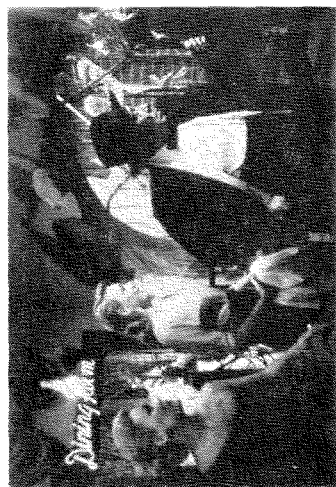
- 16 Gould - Harry Shannon; Casey - Rusty Wescoatt; Gang members - Wayne Taylor, Ken Miller, Raymond Rodriguez; Ginnie - Arlene McQuade; Lackey - Domenick Delgarde; Young delinquent - Joe Basulto; Jackie - Jennie Dias; Bobbie - Yolanda Bojorquez; Lia - Eleanor Dorado. (This cast list is both incomplete and overcomplete: derived from a variety of sources, it misses certain named characters - Rudy Linneker, Eddie Farnum, Ed Hanson - and includes a number of character names not given in the film - Blaine, Casey, Ginnie, Lackey (?), Jackie, Bobbie - making identification more or less difficult.)

Running time - 93 minutes.

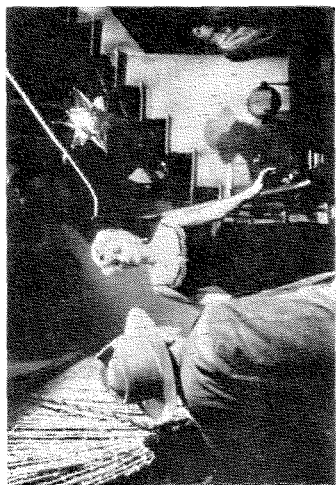
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The working synopsis given above provides some indication of the narrative of *Touch of Evil*; what then remains to be determined is the economy of that narrative, its articulation cinematically as narrative in the discourse of the film, and, within the terms of that economy, the logic of its production. The word 'economy' is used both for the recognition it offers of the fundamentally economical purpose of classic narrative in cinema (principles of practicability, avoidance of waste, homogenisation) and for its stress on the relation of that purpose to a transference and restabilisation of energy (from the symbolic to the imaginary in the image of that homogenisation: the administration of the film as coalescence of signified and signifier); by 'logic' is meant the pressure of this economy: how it functions, what it contains, what it answers to, and so the excess of its order, the other scene of its production figured at the very points of subtraction in the terms of the representation. Economy and logic in their movement and displacement constitute the filmic system.

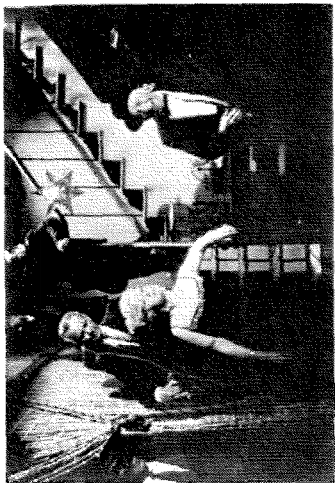
There exists a model for the description of the organisation of the narrative in classic cinema which is both precise and authoritative: Metz's *grande syntagmatique* or 'large syntagmatic category', the elucidation of that cinematic code which organises the most usual spatio-temporal order of the sequence (*Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, Paris 1968, pp 125f; *Film Language*, NY 1974, pp 124f). The effective translation of the reference given by the model into the analysis of a particular *filmic system*, however, raises problems; in one sense it is relatively easy to divide up *Touch of Evil* into autonomous segments as these are defined in their various types in the *grande syntagmatique*, while in another to do so is extremely difficult. Part of the difficulty is the force of the flow of the action, a continuity which can often seem to elide its forms (for Metz, certain types lack firmness: 'The ordinary sequence or the scene have contours which are somewhat hazy, it is often hard to pull them out of the realm of the unformed, to isolate them from the general filmic flow' - *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*



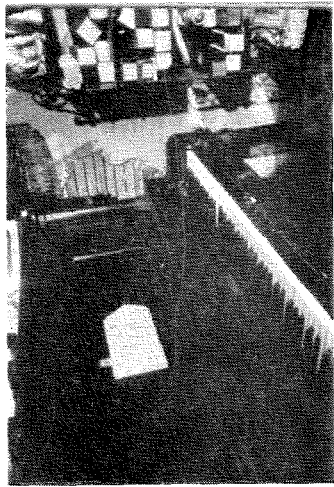
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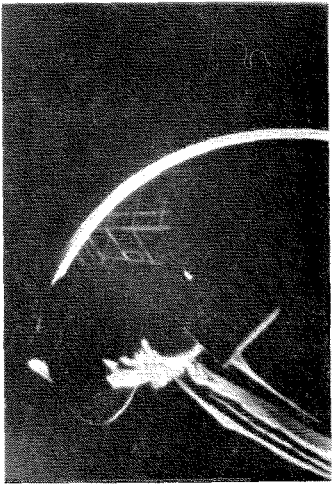
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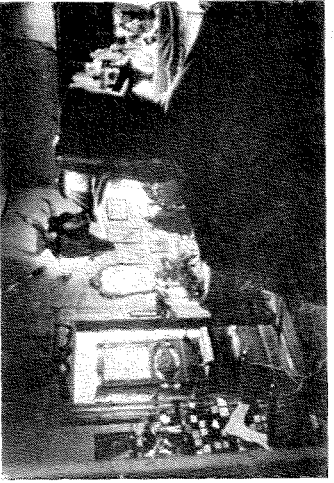
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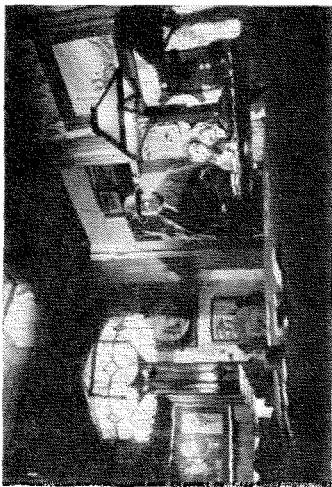
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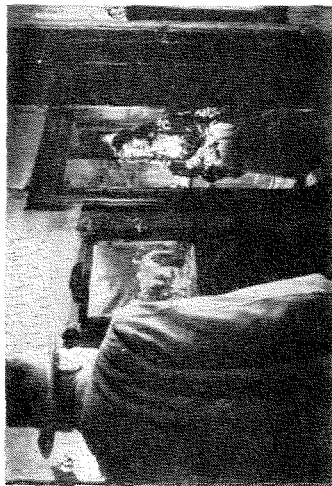
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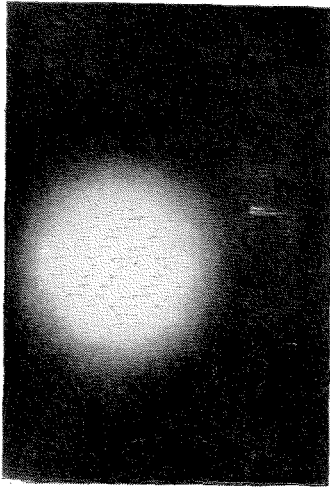
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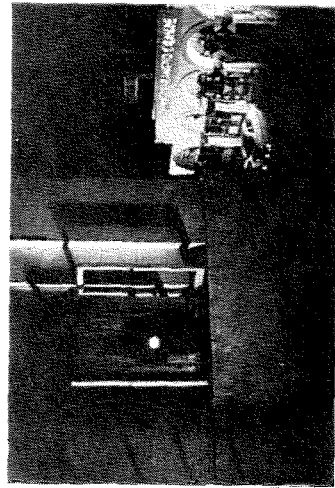
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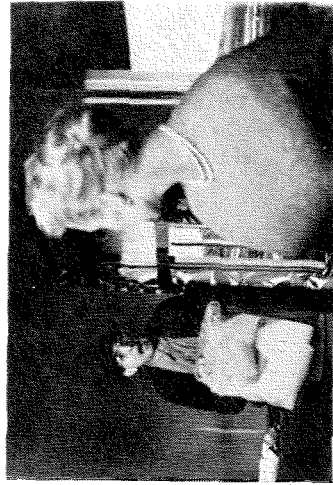
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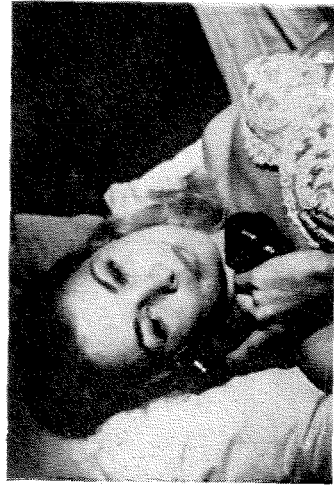
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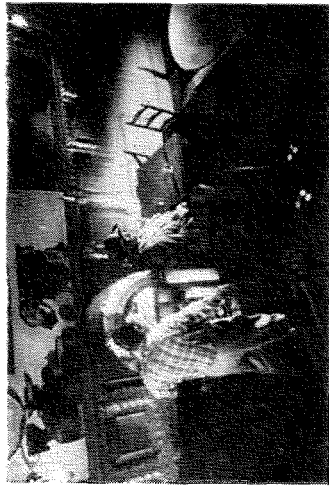
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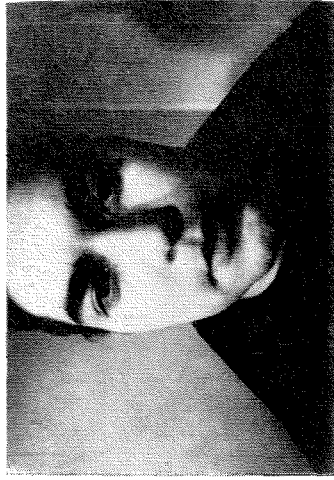
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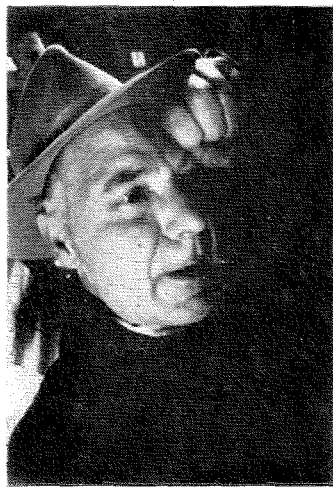
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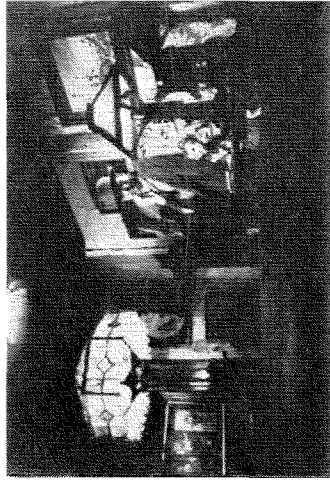
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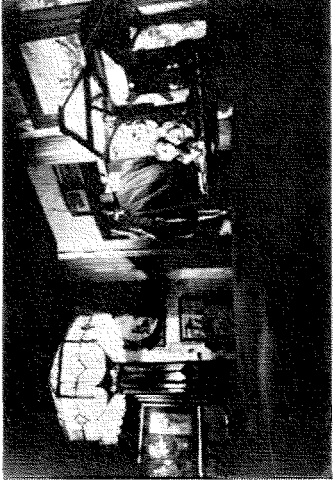
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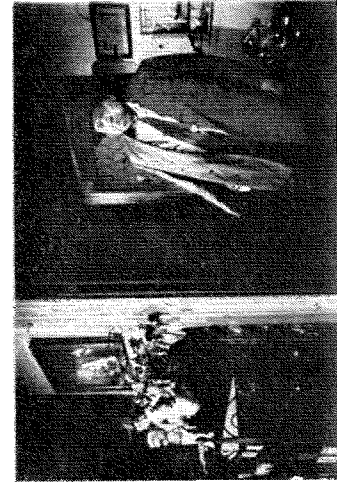
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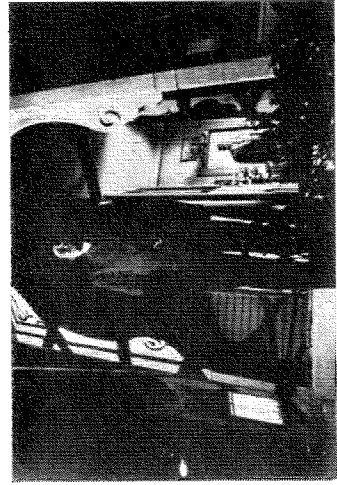
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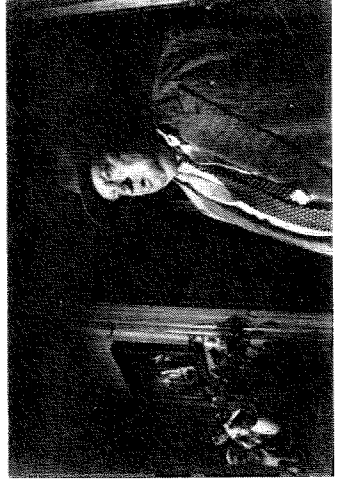
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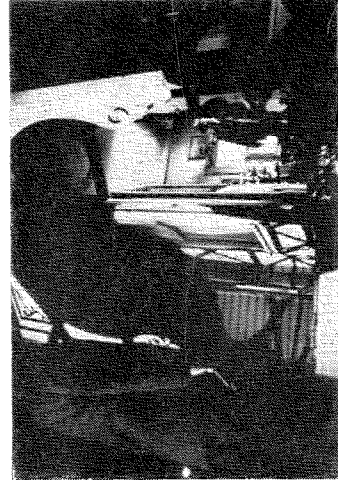
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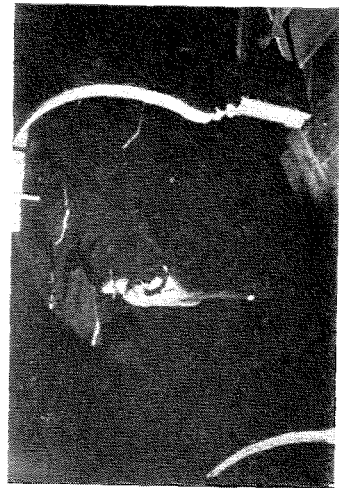
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II, Paris 1972, p 206) and part again, interdependent with this, is the pull of the logic of the narrative economy, the movement-displacement of the filmic system which takes up segments in and across a number of systems and partial systems; hence, for instance, the hesitation shown by Bellour in his piece on *The Birds* (*Cahiers du cinéma* n 216, October 1969, p 25) as to the classification of the segment in question:

'It would not be correct to describe this segment as an "ordinary sequence" since, although its consecutiveness appears to be a single order, it is not discontinuous; it might be called an "alternating narrative syntagm" if the split between the person seeing and his vision, forming a double action, were interpreted as a double temporal consecutiveness; or, finally, a "scene" if one recognises in it the rule of a single continuous consecutiveness.'

The result of the difficulty is to render highly attractive the resurrection of the notion of 'sequence' – which in the *grande syntagmatique* is limited to quite specific types of autonomous segment – to describe an extended unit of filmic discourse that may well comprise more than one autonomous segment (the sequence of Susan's enforced singing career in *Citizen Kane*, for example, made up of episodic sequence, scene, bracketing syntagm and sequence shot) or, further away from that common use of the term, a less extensive unit within which and across which the play of the systems pertinent in the analysis demands a suppleness (a plurality) of definition. Here too, the Bellour piece mentioned earlier is indicative in its preference for 'sequence' over and above, as it were, the Metzian classification:

'"Sequence" is an approximate term, often deceptive with regard to that flexible and continuous art of narration characteristic of the classicism of the great American cinema. Thus, although the present section has its justification, it also has its arbitrariness. Neither the beginning nor the end can properly be said to constitute this section of film as a closed and strictly definable unit. The analysis could go beyond them, even perhaps to the extent of rediscovering the film in its entirety. But inversely, it is the analysis which determines the autonomy of this section, precisely by the range of its movement and its very possibility' (*ibid*).

Which is to say that the analysis of a filmic system needs to break the simple tourniquet of either the rigorous division of the *grande syntagmatique* (rigorous, but inevitably inadequate in respect of that system) or the loose generality of the ordinary breakdown into sequences ('units of the overall diegesis, referential units, or again, units of the script; "main parts" which correspond less to the film than to the written account one might give of it, or to the memory retained of the film as a whole' – Metz: *Essais II*, p 129). The *grande syntagmatique* holds together in its analysis signified

28 and signifier, form of content and form of expression (disposition of shots according to the realisation of a spatio-temporal order); the problem is the development of a similar analytic grasp in relation to an object where elements of code are displaced in the mesh of systems and partial systems. Thus the complete account of the division of *Touch of Evil* into autonomous segments is not included in this version of the present analysis which attempts instead to operate a variety of sequence divisions of differing length and status in order to bring out the terms of that mesh, to construct the filmic system. As was emphasised above, such a construction, such an object, involves an attention to the film as a production whose functioning is irreducible simply to formulations of code and use, cinematic and non-cinematic, and so on. It might be remembered in this context how psychoanalysis operates a breakdown of language which cuts across and undercuts that of linguistics (Lacan indeed distinguishes *langage* and *lalangue*: consistent structure, the knowledge of linguistics, and effective insistence, the knowledge of the unconscious; 'The unconscious is a knowledge, a know-how-to-do with *lalangue*. And what one knows how to do with *lalangue* goes a long way beyond what can be described in terms of *langage*' - *Le Séminaire livre XX: Encore*, Paris 1975, p 127) without ceasing for all that to be a - the? - fundamental engagement with language in the material specificity of its determinations, the articulations of the heterogeneity of process of the subject. The analogy is helpful, and more than an analogy: its object the filmic system, analysis here disturbs the models of the semiology of cinema; and that disturbance, functioning of the film as production, refinds a process of which psychoanalysis is, exactly, the 'approach'.

In the context of these remarks, three segments will be looked at in some detail: the beginning of the film (I a - I l) and two passages (I h, IV e) that rhyme from one end of the film to the other. Any choice has its degree of arbitrariness, but, in the dialectic between fragment and system which is the movement of the analysis, the reasons for this choice will quickly become clear.

IV

The definition of the beginning, in fact, brings with it a further degree of arbitrariness. It would be possible to take as the beginning of *Touch of Evil* the planting of the bomb and its explosion, perfectly enclosed in an initial sequence-shot (I a); or again, the portion of the film up to the cut from Quinlan leaving Tanya's to Vargas walking back to his hotel (I a - I h): the main characters have been introduced, the crime and its investigation posed. The present analysis, however, understands the beginning as a considerably longer section of the film - up to the first establishing

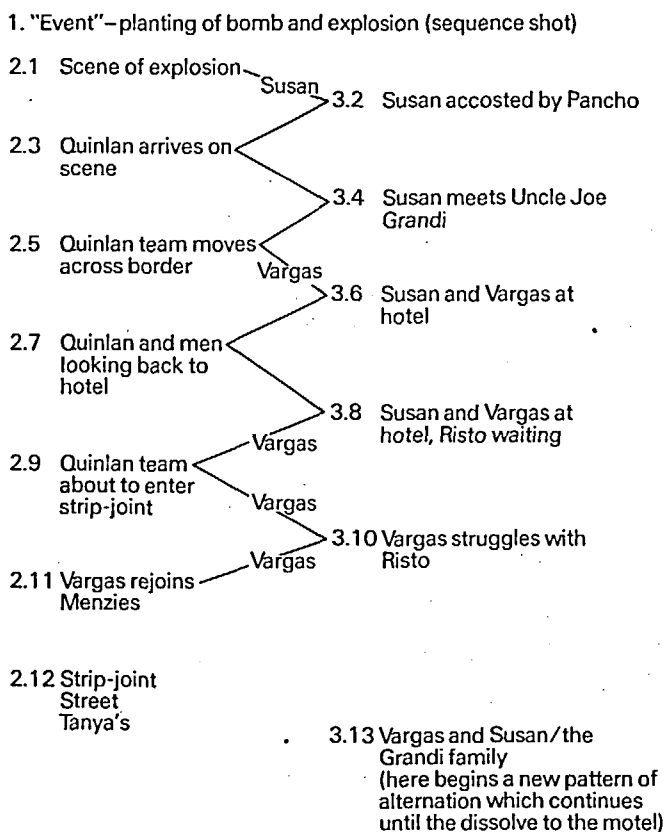
shot of the motel (I a – I l). Terminated by what is for the film a strong mark of punctuation (dissolve) and a shift of locale (the motel outside the town), this section has the coherence of the unities of time (night to day), place (Los Robles) and action (a continuous advance with no doubling back or past explanation). More crucially, it sets in play the elements – of narrative and discourse and the crossing of the two – which in their systematisation-perturbation (the excess over the narrative action) turn the filmic system. Above all, it opens up the displacement of the fiction, of the image of the narrative, inaugurates the sliding friction of the system of *Touch of Evil*: what place do 'I' – subject and figurant – occupy? what is the *position* of the film? Significantly, in a kind of disjunctive agreement with the diegetic coherence previously cited, the sequence, which has already come to a halt with the drift from strip-joint to Tanya's (I h), ends to dissolve into the pure gratuity of the motel clerk (II a): that is, as at Tanya's, the return of a sexuality of which the narrative is the impossible alignment. For this systematic beginning, the bomb planting is the premiss and the first half to Tanya's a loop which the second concludes (as one 'concludes' a deal, accepting and thereby inaugurating) through the establishing confirmation of a series of figures of exchange as the action of the filmic system. The analysis of the beginning is precisely the analysis of this establishment over the progress of the narrative.

With regard to the narrative, three diegetic lines can be distinguished in the beginning section: 1. the 'event' – the planting of the bomb and its explosion; 2. the start of the police investigation; 3. the attacks on Susan as Vargas' wife and the subsequent attacks against Vargas himself. 1. is entirely exhausted in this section; and from the very outset, coinciding as it does with the opening shot and forming very much a sort of narrative premiss (it can be noted that the credits appear during the shot, shown over the car travelling through the town). 2. and 3., by contrast, are the decisive strands of the film's narrative which effectively intertwines them until they hold together as one thread (Quinlan's partnership with Grandi confuses investigation and attacks); in this section, the strands are mediated by Vargas who physically and constantly transfers from one to the other, and polarised by Quinlan and Susan as respective focuses of the two strands (the confusion of this clarity in the narrative is also the systematic commotion of the problem of Susan's 'position' as subject of desire).

The section runs 2. and 3. in parallel, picking up now one, now the other, without interrupting the single temporal advance: each time the film comes back to a strand, it does so allowing for the

- 30 period elapsed since its last appearance; the sequence is consecutive, not simultaneous (2.1/ 3.2/ 2.3/ 3.4/ 2.5/ . . . , not 2.1/ 3.1/ 2.2/ 3.2/ 2.3/ 3.3/ . . .). Figure I indicates the progression of the alternation, and it will be noted at once that Vargas' transference from strand to strand lapses at 2.11 where he rejoins Menzies after the chase with Risto and exits as though to catch up

FIGURE I



with Quinlan in the strip-joint but is then absent from 2.12, only being rediscovered in 3.13 which opens with a shot of him going back to his hotel. This absence produces the sole break in the consecutiveness: if in 2.11 Vargas in fact exits to go back to the hotel, 3.13 finds him, as it were, at the outset of that action, just crossing the street (moreover, there is a smooth continuity link:

exit towards camera off left in 2.11/ enter far right moving across down left in 3.13). The break is not emphatic (and could indeed be disputed) but a certain interruption can be felt and demonstrated at 2.12, and it is significant that a loss of narrative time should be marked in this way, a moment in which Vargas cannot figure.

Adopting the classification of the *grande syntagmatique*, the section might be expressed as:

(i) *Autonomous shot* – *Sequence shot* from the planting of the bomb to the sound of the explosion ('an entire scene treated in a single shot; the shot derives its autonomy from the unity of action').

(ii) *Autonomous shot* – A brief shot of the car exploding and bursting into flames. The decision to call this an *insert* raises difficulties since, firstly, it comes between two autonomous segments (rather than within one) and, secondly, it does not fit comfortably into any of the four types of insert recognised by the *grande syntagmatique*. It can best be characterised perhaps as an *explanatory insert* which describes – as opposed to explaining (we already know) – the cause of the sound heard off at the close of the previous segment; it is not an 'enlarged detail' nor is it 'removed from its empirical space', but it is related in some sense to a 'mental operation', showing what Vargas and Susan see as they turn in (i) at the sound off. (The difficulties, and hence the somewhat evasive handling of the *grande syntagmatique*, could be avoided either by making this a sequence-shot or by considering it as a true insert within a scene stretching over 1. and 2.1, but the former would simply be inaccurate and the latter has little to recommend it; we are up against that problem of the *effective* translation of the model into the analysis of the filmic system.)

(iii) *Alternating syntagm* – It may seem dubious to subsume the extent of the film from 2.1 to 2.11 as a single autonomous segment, yet such a procedure answers to the economy of the film's narrative. (It is also worth drawing attention to the binding over of the passage: the first shot of 2.1 has Vargas running from right to left towards the camera/ the last shot of 2.11 has him exiting towards camera off left – the 'completion' of the initial movement.) This said, it needs to be stressed that the branches of the alternation are organised individually as a succession of *scenes* (unity of place, unity of action, coincidence between diegetic time and discursive time); with the exception of 2.5, 3.6 and 2.7 which are each one shot, are elements, that is, of a quicker alternation more characteristic of what is normally understood as an alternating syntagm – the greater the distance between the alternations, the less the alternation is grasped significantly as such. The last point, moreover, brings us to the discrepancy between the segment proposed here and the alternating syntagm as defined in the *grande syntagmatique*, the montage alternatively of 'two or more series of

32 events in such a way that within each series the temporal relationships are consecutive, but that, between the series taken as wholes, the temporal relationship is one of simultaneity'. In the present instance, as was seen above, the relationship between the wholes is itself consecutive: 3.2 is the time between the end of 2.1 and the arrival of the District Attorney in 2.3; 2.3 is the time between Susan deciding to follow Pancho in 3.2 and her arrival with him at the hotel in 3.4; and so on. The classification as alternating syntagm is nevertheless retained in response to the pressure of the alternation; merely to describe the constitutive elements as so many discrete units, scenes and autonomous shots, would be to miss that guiding significance – and alternation, across every level, is one of the major figures of the filmic system: a kind of incessant exchange which leaves nothing in place. (It should be remembered that Metz himself regards the alternating syntagm as the most problematic of the *grande syntagmatique* types – witness the various difficulties it encounters in the course of the breakdown of *Adieu Philippine* – see *Essais I*, pp 151f; *Film Language*, pp 149f).

(iv) *Autonomous shot* – *Sequence-shot* of Quinlan and his team of followers in the strip-joint.

(v) *Scene with insert* – Quinlan and his men come out into the street, and Quinlan then moves alone towards Tanya's; each of these two 'moments' being given in a single, lengthy, shot and separated by a brief shot of the pianola inside Tanya's playing away. The pianola shot has some of the characteristics of the explanatory insert but is more finely described as a *displaced diegetic insert*: it shows the cause of the sound and in so doing it operates a prolepsis, anticipating Quinlan's actual entry into Tanya's.

(vi) *Scene* – Quinlan inside Tanya's. (These last three segments are the division of what is given in Figure I as 2.12 and, considered in terms of the filmic system, they have a tight unity of 'inter-displacement'.)

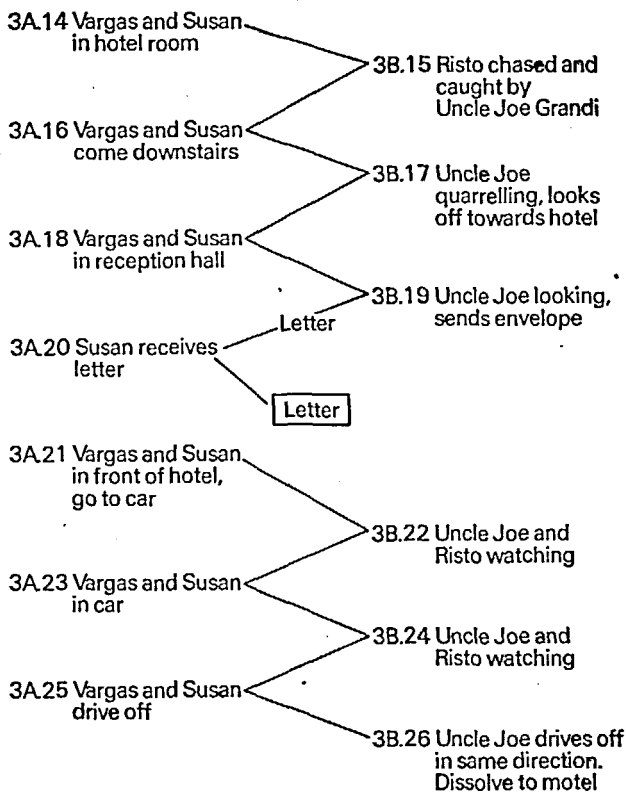
(vii) *Scene* – The torch-beam attack on Susan as Vargas returns to the hotel; 'through means that are *already* filmic (separate shots that are later combined), the scene reconstructs a unit *still* experienced as being "concrete": a place, a moment in time, an action, compact and specific . . . the signifier is fragmentary in the scene . . . but the signified is perceived in unified and continuous fashion'; as in (vi), the basic fragmentation here is shot/reverse shot.

(viii) *Alternating syntagm* – Though the same reservations apply as for (iii), what now begins is essentially a pattern of alternation between Vargas-Susan and the Grandi clan in one consecutive advance. The portion of film rather abruptly listed in Figure I as 3.13 is thus detailed in Figure II as a movement similar to that of 2.1-2.11, making clear the progression: 2. alternates with 3. which splits in turn into the alternation of 3A and 3B. A careful com-

parison of the two diagrams also reveals the development of the film in bands of repetition and difference (in rhymes): the alternation is repeated with Uncle Joe Grandi in the structural position of Quinlan – the look off towards Susan and Vargas (2.7 and

FIGURE II

3.13 "Event" – Pancho's torch-beam attack on Susan as Vargas returns to hotel (scene)



3B.17); the trigger of the pattern is an event that divides Vargas from Susan – in 1. the explosion breaks a kiss and Susan is sent back to the hotel with Pancho interposing himself en route, in 3.13 Pancho is interposed literally between Vargas returning to the

34 hotel and Susan in her room (from a high angle shot of Vargas in the street, the camera pans to Pancho shining the torch before a cut to Susan), with the division subsequently ratified in the argument as to where Susan should go; the equivalent in 3A and 3B to the exchange over of Vargas between 2. and 3. is simply the letter, which, however, is a failed exchange (symptomatically, the letter drops right out of the narrative) – Grandi's contact with Susan has to pass through Quinlan (the double look, the deal later on) and this is to put himself in place as Quinlan, but equally for Quinlan, hence as Susan; the comparison of the diagrams touches immediately on the crucial action of multiple exchange that is the production of the filmic system.

Eight autonomous segments for some twenty-five minutes of narrative film: the number is small and, even if it reflects the construction (use of extended shots, extreme temporal continuity), could doubtless be increased according to the possibility of further breakdown discussed under (iii) and likewise applicable to (viii). The purpose here was not to arrive at a definitive account but to offer a preliminary approach to the section and to bring out one or two issues from the perspective provided by the *grande syntagmatique*. Once again, this is very much an analysis *in progress*.

That perspective, moreover, allows us to rectify a potential misunderstanding with regard to the temporal continuity of the section as hitherto described. Evidently, there is a disjunction between narrative time (night to dawn) and the time of the narration (twenty-five minutes); the point is that the disjunction is never, as it were, 'in' the segments themselves (the section contains no sequences in the strict sense of the *grande syntagmatique* – concatenations with discontinuity) nor 'between' them (articulated significantly from one to the other; an example would be the opening of *The Maltese Falcon*: the scene in the Spade and Archer office which ends with Archer agreeing to help Brigid O'Shaunessy in the evening is followed by the sequence of Archer's murder that evening, 'that evening' being precisely what is signified in the gap between the two) – held 'outside', the disjunction fades into the illusion of coincidence.

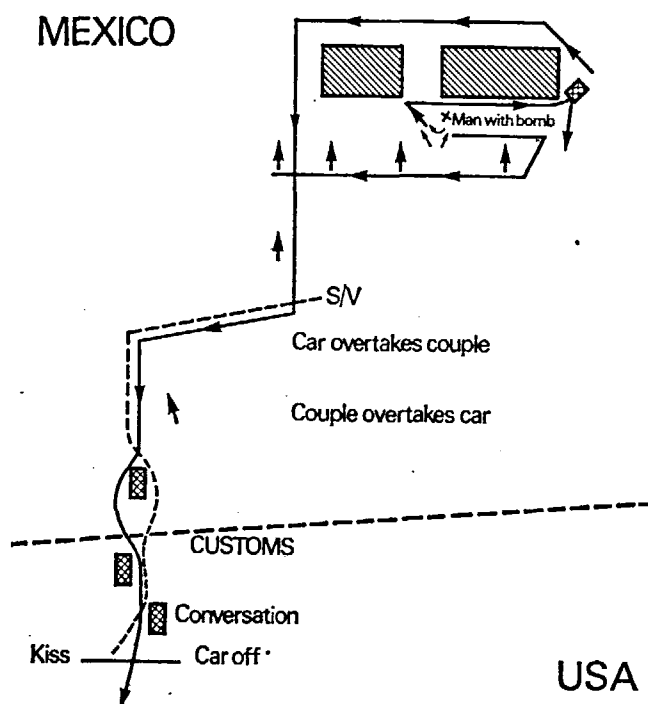
The figures (I and II) give the formal pattern of the section in its movement of alternation, the approach via analysis into autonomous segments (the perspective of that analysis) proposes certain insights into the construction of the alternating movement; it remains, within and against the terms of these descriptions, to demonstrate fully the interplay of systems at work over that construction. The demonstration will be done as a commentary on the beginning of the film, segment by segment, after the segmentation used in the two figures, which has at least the virtue of convenience and easy intelligibility. At this level of the analysis, move-

ment and systems can be seen to divide up the text in a plurality of ways; the relative arbitrariness of the segmentation adopted is therefore unavoidable and not to be regretted. As for the notion of 'commentary', it is the record of an attention to the filmic system; its notations are from within the scope of that attention and are in no sense a claim to list 'everything' in the twenty-seven segments the section comprises. The notations are arranged under headings, but these headings are a function of the arrangement rather than a rigorous – and rigid – set of distinctions; where film and ease of presentation demand, they will occasionally be allowed to melt into one another.

1. *Description*: An unbroken shot, lasting for some two and a half minutes, which moves from a close-up of a man holding a bomb, his hand regulating the dial mechanism, to the planting of the bomb in the boot of a car, and from there to a long track backing in front of the car as it drives through the crowded streets of a town (title and credits are shown over during the car's progress), coming to a stop at a customs post; here the camera holds a conversation between the two occupants of the car, a couple on foot and a customs official, keeping the couple in frame when the car leaves over the border (Figure III). *Narrative*: The planting of the bomb followed by the suspense of the car's journey until the explosion heard off at the end of the segment, the suspense being created by a variety of means across the range of matters of expression – length of shot, tracking ahead of car, rhythmic insistence of the music, dialogue (woman passenger: 'Hey! I've got this ticking noise in my head'), etc. This effectively enclosed action also poses clearly the term of its potential development, the enigma of the identity of the killer and thus of his motive (who? why?). The close-up on which the shot opens shows only the trunk and arms of the man with the bomb and when the whole of his body is seen it is impossible to fix his face (this remains true even when the individual frames are examined on a viewing-machine). *Character*: The conversation at the customs post permits the introduction of four important characters (two are important by their immediate death, which is the premiss of the narrative and the coefficient of the filmic operation – its movement and displacement; two are protagonists in the narrative and factors in that operation): the two passengers, first seen as they leave a night-club and walk to the car while the bomb is being planted, are Rudy Linneker, middle-aged, apparently prosperous (car, manner), and an unnamed woman, blonde, youngish, visibly not his wife (speech, manner, dress, genre conventions); the couple on foot, first seen during the car's drive through the town, are Vargas, treated as a celebrity for just having smashed a drugs racket, and Susan, his wife. An atmosphere of gaiety is stressed – the carnival air of the crowded streets, the joking at the customs post, Vargas and Susan out for a stroll on their honeymoon, Vargas 'hot on the trail of a choco-

- 36 late soda for my wife'. The relationship man-wife is heavily underlined and marked with surprise: Vargas '... my wife' / Official 'Your what! ?' / Susan 'Yeah, you're right, Officer!' (note, indeed, the ambiguity of Susan's response); the end of the segment, moreover, is the interruption of the seal of union: (V and S in medium close-up about to embrace) S 'Mike, do you realise this is the very first time we've been together in my country?' / V 'Do you

FIGURE III



realise I haven't kissed you for over an hour?' / Explosion. *Partitions*: The segment situates the locus of the action as a border-town, both on image – the customs post – and sound – the dialogue concerning customs formalities – tracks. In addition, emphasis is placed on nationality: Linneker and Susan are American, Vargas and the blonde are Mexican. *Exchange*: The elements of partition at once become terms of exchange: Mexican/American :: Mexican/

American or Vargas/Susan :: Blonde/Linneker: Vargas is to Susan as Linneker to the blonde, therefore if Linneker is torn to bits in the explosion, Vargas must be torn from Susan by the force of contagion; Susan is to Vargas as the girl to Linneker, the other – the foreigner – to the man, therefore if the girl is an explosive sexuality that kills Linneker (by metonymy – the very motion of desire), Susan is an uncontrollable demand from which Vargas must separate himself in order to maintain his position (narratively, the split between Vargas as husband and Vargas as official with the Mexican government). This process of exchange is given as the organisation of the segment: the tracking – for the most part in high angle – lays out the town (spatial definition of the constant motif of ‘crossing the border’) and, in so doing, picks up Susan and Vargas as they walk through the streets to create a choreography of alternation – overtaking/being overtaken – between them and the car, forced to go slowly because of the crowd. Thus the partitions, nationality and border, are brought together filmically into a composite figure that plays across the action. *Repercussions*: The segment depends on an extreme mobility of the camera, not simply in distance covered (the long track) but also in variation of shot angle: at the moment of the bomb plant, the camera pulls up into a high angle shot that looks down on the car, the angle then being reduced to the horizontal towards the end of the car’s progress. This is the setting off of a series of modulations which form a number of systems at different levels of the film; here, for instance, deciding the extreme mobility (up and down) of the final segment (IV f), the ‘answer’ to this one and thereby the binding of the discourse in a circle of accomplishment and resolution. ‘Repercussions’ is merely a heading for the notation of such structural elements however manifested, elements which reperate over the film, *scoring* it, pushing with and against the narrative, according and fluctuating the discourse. It is the interlocking of these elements with the figures of exchange (which they help define) to hold the levels together in a sliding, since overdetermined, coherence that produces the pleasure of the film, and its system. *Light*: Night-time; oscillation of light and dark during segment according to the stages of the car’s journey through the town. *Music*: Brass and saxophone theme, ominously deep-toned, with an insistent bongoish rhythm vaguely ‘Mexican’. *Author*: The opening of *Touch of Evil* with its ‘extraordinary’ tracking shot has become a famous point of reference in ‘film culture’ and the ‘breathhtaking achievement’ it represents is one element among many others which can be systematised in reading as the signature ‘Orson Welles’, the style of the author. (Welles, of course, entered Hollywood exactly as ‘the author’; that is the meaning of the terms of the contract with RKO in 1939.) The sole interest here is in the author as an effect of the text and only in so far as the effect is significant in the production of the filmic

38 system, is a textual effect. The present heading was introduced to allow this to be made clear from the outset of the commentary.

2.1 *Description*: Cut from Susan and Vargas about to embrace at the end of 1. to a shot of the car exploding, then back to their reaction; they begin to run in towards the explosion with the camera tracking back and there follows an 'account' of the confusion of the scene handled in a small number of shots (6, joined by cuts). *Narrative*: Vargas sends Susan back to their hotel and involves himself in the scene of the explosion. *Character*: Introduction of Schwartz who describes himself as an official in the District Attorney's service; Vargas' importance and responsibility are shown—in short, his 'position'. *Partitions*: Vargas' nationality is marked (he speaks in Spanish) and the figure traced by the movement of 1. is recapitulated in a dialogue that also stresses the enigma of the explosion: Detective 'That bomb came from the Mexican side of the border' / Vargas 'The car did'. *Exchange*: The kiss is interrupted, the honeymoon postponed ('We'll have to postpone that chocolate soda, I'm afraid'); involved in the explosion, Vargas sends Susan away, back over the border: V 'This could be very bad for us' / S 'For us?' / V 'For Mexico, I mean'. The ambiguity of the involvement is evident: official, Vargas, is caught up in the explosion; husband, he is touched by its contagion. *Repercussions*: The sound off at the close of 1. carries over into this segment, links kiss and explosion, as too does movement in frame: from Vargas bending down towards Susan's lips to the car flying up in the air. The shot of the explosion is brutal: seen in long shot with the camera static, the car goes up, bursting into flames, and comes down, at which point the camera zooms in on the blazing wreckage (in the space of two or three seconds); this giving a kind of accented cadence of violence—car up/camera static/ /car static/camera in. Emphasis on the violence is continued in the film (in this section: 2.3 DA 'An hour ago Rudy Linneker had this town in his pocket' / Doctor 'Now you can strain him through a sieve'; and beyond: II e Quinlan 'An old lady on Main Street last night picked up a shoe—the shoe had a foot in it'), but, more crucially, violence is also the overbalance of the narrative: the answer to the explosion is the discovery not of its perpetrator but of its detonator, of the 'fault'—the blonde (or) Susan. *Light*: Night-time; flames and headlights. *Music*: None.

3.2 *Description*: Cut to Susan making her way back through the streets and accosted by Pancho with a note ('Follow this boy at once—he has something very important for Mr Vargas'); handled in three shots. *Narrative*: The segment begins the Grandi aggressions against Susan (and Vargas); closing on Susan's decision to follow Pancho, it dispatches the narrative sharply forward (what will happen?). *Character*: Introduction of Pancho, marked with 'Mexican-ness' and a certain foreboding of sensuality (pose,

manner, expression, leather jacket, insouciance, Susan's reaction); Susan manifests a kind of exasperated determination and a sense of repartee. *Partitions*: Pancho is Mexican to Susan as American (Pancho speaks Spanish and bystanders interpret between the two); Susan has crossed back into Mexico, Pancho will lead her over the border again into America (S 'Across the border again? I.'). *Exchange*: Pancho is to Susan as Vargas is to Susan, Mexican to American; the walk through the town and over the border taken by Vargas and Susan in 1., is now to be taken by Pancho and Susan. If Pancho is a 'boy' ('Pancho', indeed, is a slighting nickname given by Susan), Susan 'nevertheless' takes the encounter as sexual (once away from Vargas, all Susan's encounters are sexual incidents); whence a layer of divisions: to follow Pancho is to follow Vargas ('something very important for Vargas') but to follow Pancho is to lose – or to abandon – Vargas by the fact of the substitution, putting Pancho in the place of desire (S 'What have I got to lose? Don't answer that!'); thus, on the one hand Susan goes with Pancho, on the other she invokes the image of Vargas as husband-official (the official position of her sexuality) – but this is precisely what separates her, narratively and symbolically, from Vargas: Bystander 'Lady, he says you don't understand what he wants' / S 'I understand very well what he wants. . . . Tell him I'm a married woman and my husband is a great big official in the government ready and willing to knock out all those pretty front teeth of his'. *Names*: Pancho, a main character, has no name throughout the film other than the nickname of his relation with Susan (unnameable, he is a *mixture* – Vargas, in 3.8, 'This . . . this "kid" (word spoken with difficulty), what did he want?'). In the novel *Badge of Evil*, Vargas is called Holt and there is no equivalent to Pancho (apart from the basic elements of the conflict between official and crooked policeman, novel and film have little in common). Where does the name 'Vargas' come from? From Pancho, as though to confirm the exchange: the actor Valentin de Vargas. *Repercussions*: The series of scenes that play out the Susan-Pancho encounter, terminating in the half-rape in the motel (III 1); the return of the narrative and the position of Vargas: in IV c he does knock out Pancho's teeth. *Light*: Night-time; brightly lit streets. *Music*: 'Mexican' theme (different to 1.), insistent bongoish rhythm.

2.3 *Description*: Cut to the scene of the explosion; in some eleven shots (fixed and moving, near and general) the confusion is described as first the DA then Marcia Linneker arrive; the twelfth shot marks the entry of Quinlan and what follows is dominated by the tension of his dialogue with Vargas, mostly in shot/reverse shot. *Narrative*: The start of the investigation into the explosion and thus of the conflict between Quinlan and Vargas. *Character*: Introduction of the DA (Adair), Marcia Linneker, Sergeant Pete Menzies (shown as Quinlan's righthand man), Chief Gould and,

40 most notably, Hank Quinlan. The segment is centred on Quinlan's arrival, which constitutes an event both for the narrative (the investigation) and, so to speak, for itself – Quinlan's 'character' is an event. Everything works towards this centring: the wait for Quinlan (he is the last on the scene), the terms of the anticipation of his arrival (DA 'Well here comes Hank at last. Vargas, you've heard of Hank Quinlan, our local police celebrity?' / V 'I'd like to meet him' / Doctor 'That's what you think'), the presentation of the final entry (after the eleven shots of confusion, there is a sudden moment of stillness as, framed alone in low angle, Quinlan throws open his car door, pauses and climbs out). Quinlan's appearance is shabby and slovenly (his dress contrasts with Vargas' suit and the DA's dinner jacket – Quinlan 'Well, what do you know! the DA in a monkey suit!'); the shot of him getting out of the car emphasises his cigar and his cane; he moves with difficulty because of his immense bulk (his *flesh* is constantly stressed in close shots, here and in the rest of the film) and walks with a limp (his 'game leg'; explained to Vargas as the source of his 'intuition' – its twinges 'talk' to him). *Partitions*: Quinlan is American, Vargas Mexican: this is Quinlan's opposition – 'I hear you even invited some kind of a Mexican'; 'You don't talk like one – a Mexican, I mean' – and the response is to clarify Vargas' status – DA 'I don't think Mr Vargas claims any kind of jurisdiction'; V 'I'm merely what the United Nations would call an observer'. At one point, however, Vargas is framed alone against a poster reading 'Welcome Stranger! to picturesque Los Robles the Paris of the Border' and the end of the segment is straight conflict between Vargas and Quinlan, each singled out in turn in near close up/close up as in the last two shots: V 'Captain, you won't have any trouble with me' / Q 'You bet your sweet life I won't'. *Repercussions*: Having identified her father's body, Marcia refuses to look at the woman who was with him – 'I'm not acquainted with my father's girlfriends'. The response and disdain (but what is Marcia's position?) confirm the sexuality (Quinlan in this same segment talks of 'some jane, some strip-teaser'), mark the bad object, and that object is erased from the screen, in and from the diegetic space: the characters facing the camera in near close shot look down but the bodies are never seen; unless it be to place us in the reflection of violence: a low angle shot shows the Doctor crouching and bending forward ('now you can strain him through a sieve') with a group of onlookers behind – we are in the impossible position, the object is the loss of position, of point of view, our death./ The initial low angle shot of Quinlan inaugurates a series that combines shot angle and narrative meaning in an easy evidence: dominating, Quinlan is not seen in high angle until the turning point of the deal with Grandi (III d; Still 19) and then at the beginning of the end, the exit from Tanya's to the final show-down (IV e; Still 55). This system, be it noted, is a partial system:

it forms a whole but does not circumscribe all the low angle effects in the text (which could be systematised, for example, with regard to the signature 'Welles'). *Light*: Night-time; light from headlights, etc. *Music*: None. *'Author'*: Quinlan's arrival exceeds the diegetic space; it is prepared as 'a great moment of cinema', a star turn – the colossal entry of Quinlan-Welles. Doubled with effects of style (shot angles, distortions, framing), by the signature, it marks a circulation and a division: actor-director; of interest if it signifies in the system as a problem of position.

3.4 *Description*: Cut to Susan arriving at a hotel with Pancho; inside, the meeting with Grandi: variations on shot/reverse shot. *Narrative*: Begun in 3.2, the first of the Grandi aggressions crystallises in the behaviour towards Susan and the vague menaces ('advice') transmitted through her to Vargas. *Character*: Introduction of Uncle Joe Grandi, brother of the Grandi whose drug racket has been smashed by Vargas. *Partitions*: Grandi speaks Spanish with Pancho, has difficulty in following Susan's rapid delivery, is endowed with 'Mexican-ness' in his appearance; at the same time, he is an American citizen and declares that his name 'ain't Mexican'. Like Pancho, he is a mixture, and the idea of the Grandi 'family' stresses this ('some of us in Mexico, some of us on this side'). *Exchange*: As Susan and Pancho arrive at the hotel, camera tracking with them in close medium-shot, Susan is called from off ('Hey lady!'); while she turns, there is a cut to a fixed shot of a Mexican woman holding up a baby; cut back to a medium shot of Susan standing in the hotel entrance with Pancho and smiling towards the woman off (towards the camera) – suddenly they are illuminated by the light from a flash-bulb. In this brief incident Susan is thus tricked into having her photo taken and the narrative expectation is clearly that some form of blackmail is in preparation. The expectation, however, is not to be fulfilled, the incident comes to nothing; what remains of it – what determined it? – is precisely this image, the photograph: Pancho for Vargas, here is Susan's honeymoon snap (outside the hotel), with the baby as mediation. *Names*: The segment indicates that 'Pancho' is a nickname, and an insult: Grandi 'Why you call him Pancho?' / Susan 'For laughs, I guess'. Against the nickname, Susan places heavy emphasis on 'Mike', 'my husband', 'Mr Vargas'. / It should also be noted that the name 'Grandi' is sometimes spelt 'Grande' by Welles critics; the film provides no clear way of deciding and all that is important is its 'foreign-ness', its (ironical) semantic possibility of 'bigness', its translation into such 'jokes' as 'Grandi's Rancho Grande' (the name of Uncle Joe's night-club cum strip-joint), its 'mixedness' ('the name ain't Mexican'). *Repercussions*: The scene in the hotel is crucial over the whole of the film: the composition within the frame, for instance, turning Susan and Grandi in patterns of domination with Pancho as a kind of 'floater', is the beginning of a series of systems and

42 partial systems which themselves become supports in various chains of substitution and exchange. Central in this respect, mentioned now simply for later reference, is the shot of Grandi in medium shot on the left-hand side of the frame cocking his gun across Susan standing back from him facing the camera, with Pancho off in the position of the camera (in our position), almost mirrored in frame in a mirror behind Susan. An early shot of Grandi shows him knotting his tie in that same mirror with Susan coming up behind him; the last shot of Grandi (IV b) has him hanging over Susan in mirror image, strangled with her stocking./ The menace with the gun is also the menace with the large cigar Grandi smokes (close-ups show Grandi and Susan together with the cigar a kind of trait pointed at her); the cigar joins Grandi and Quinlan and both aggress Susan, but Grandi is small, as much dominated by Susan as dominating her; by being Quinlan, he can have Susan, but in this way he is Susan to Quinlan: once again, a mixture./ There are no children in the film; the baby held up to Susan posing with Pancho in Vargas' place has its answer, however, in II d: crossing the street to phone Susan, held by Pancho in the motel, Vargas' path intersects that of a woman pushing a pram; image twice over of his displacement, Vargas sees nothing (at the moment of the intersection he puts on dark glasses) and he enters the blind woman's shop to reject the image – the film-photo – of Susan's desire./ During the conversation with Grandi Susan comments: 'You know what's wrong with you, Mr Grandi? you've been seeing too many gangster movies'. In one sense, the classic analysis applies: the reference to film in the film draws attention to the film at the same time as it confirms its illusion (one might equally consider in this context perhaps the reverse deep focus/flattening effects of the shots into the mirror in the segment); in another, that analysis misses the point: the reference misfits the attention-confirmation mould because of its literal truth – this is *not* a gangster movie, which is its problem, the running down of the narrative from here until the halt in the scene that contains the only other vocally declared reference to the movies: the scene in Tanya's, the other side of the illusion. *Light*: Night-time; illumination of the flash-bulb, inside the hotel the constant effect of a neon sign outside flicking on and off. *Music*: Din of music in the street, as though from nearby bar; heard more or less distantly throughout the conversation inside.

2.5 *Description*: Cut from Susan leaving the hotel to Quinlan leading a group of men through the town streets; one shot with tracking movement. *Narrative*: The investigation gets underway. *Partitions*: Quinlan has crossed over into Mexico – DA 'Quinlan, we just can't cross over into Mexico like this!'; 'This is Mexican territory, what can we do?' – and is repeating in reverse the car's passage in 1. The jurisdiction – Quinlan or Vargas – thus changes; at the end of the segment Menzies turns to ask Vargas whether

there is any objection to them asking a few questions. *Exchange:* As Menzies turns, he finds that Vargas is missing; Vargas has left the group (though he is never actually seen in it) to rejoin Susan, inaugurating thereby that mediation between the alternating narrative strands previously discussed. *Repercussions:* Quinlan is on his way to the strip-joint for information concerning the woman killed with Linneker; seen as the men go up the main street, a hoarding can be distinguished above the entrance reading '20 sizzling strippers'; the words operate a condensation over different matters of expression: Rudy Linneker goes up in flames with a sizzling stripper (sexuality explodes) and the rhythm of the shot of the explosion comes back as the dance of the accentuation of the body, the zoom in of the fascinated gaze, and the horrified effacement – burning, the stripper herself must be burnt, wiped out, placed outside, the position of death./ Emphasis on Quinlan's cane as he is seen walking along. *Light:* Night-time; the crowds have gone, open streets, a few signs and doorways lit up. *Music:* None.

3.6 *Description:* Cut to Vargas opening the door into the hotel lobby to greet Susan; one shot, slight movement following Vargas inside. *Narrative:* Vargas joins Susan who starts to relate her adventure. *Light:* Night-time; interior lighting. *Music:* None.

2.7 *Description:* Cut to Menzies and the others in the street, still looking off towards Vargas and Susan (the hotel is glass-fronted); Quinlan, who has been some way ahead of the group, also comes back to look; one shot. *Narrative:* The narrative content has already been given in the description; the segment functions as an element of the alternation (in future when description and narrative fold together without need for further commentary, the heading 'narrative' will simply be omitted). *Partitions:* Told that the woman is Vargas' wife, Quinlan adds: 'Well what do you know! She don't look Mexican either'. *Exchange:* If Susan does not look Mexican, what does she look like? For Quinlan, there is no doubt: she is a 'jane', no different to the stripper (2.3); so she too will have to be wiped out. *Light and Music:* As 2.5.

3.8 *Description:* Cut to Vargas and Susan in the hotel lobby; their conversation is followed until a cut to show them from outside through the glass fronting and to take in the entry of a youth who waits out of their sight; as Vargas leaves and begins to cross the street into camera, there is a tracking movement backwards to hold Vargas and the youth coming after him. *Narrative:* Susan has been telling Vargas of her encounter with Pancho and Grandi and is arguing with him about whether or not they should stay in Los Robles. The start of the second Grandi aggression. *Character:* Tension between Vargas and Susan. In fact, this tension plays across and into the terms of partition and exchange: divided from his American wife by the explosion, Vargas, the Mexican official, split between his official position and his position as husband, now

- 44 uses both positions to maintain the division; V 'I can't just walk away from all this. . . .' S 'Of course! Even on his honeymoon, the Chairman of the Pan-American Narcotics Commission has a sacred duty to perform! ' / V 'Suzy, you know it's more than just a high-sounding title, now they're pushing my *wife* around! ' / S 'Can't we forget about that?' The position must be safeguarded – restored – at all costs, both Vargas's and Susan's. *Light:* Night-time; lit interior, street with lighting from hotel. *Music:* None.

2.9 *Description:* Cut to Quinlan and his men seen from behind
3.10 in near shot about to enter the strip-joint from the back
2.11 way; cut to Vargas turning along a wall to catch them up; as he does so, a voice off calls him and there follows a confrontation with the youth in a brief shot/reverse shot alternation ending in a struggle which itself ends with the youth breaking away and Vargas returning, rejoining Menzies and exiting as though to catch up Quinlan again. *Narrative:* The three segments are taken together because of their rapidity of succession and their homogeneity; Vargas, as it were, quickly crosses from one strand to the other and then back; the investigation continues its first stage and the second Grandi aggression is completed. *Character:* Introduction of Risto, the youth (named only in 3B. 15); a younger version of Pancho, but more nervous and less overtly sensual. *Repercussions:* In 3.4 Susan is called by a voice off and has her photo taken with Pancho; here Vargas is called by a voice off and has vitriol thrown at him by another Pancho (from the same 'family'). The terms of the repercussion are those of part of a spiral of exchange./ In the struggle, the vitriol misses Vargas and splashes over a poster advertising the main attraction in the strip-joint, Zita; as segment 2.12 makes clear, Zita is the woman with Linneker in the explosion: thus, for a second time, the sizzling stripper is herself destroyed, burnt by the vitriol which sizzles on the soundtrack while the image of Zita is held blackened and smoking in near shot. The spiral of exchange comes round again: Susan is always potentially interchangeable with Zita, a mirror image (S to Z; for Vargas, she is always SuZy), and the problem then is to destroy that image, her image – narratively, by framing her for murder; symbolically, but this is more difficult and the difficulty is the systematic movement of the film, by wiping her out, like Zita./ Entering the back way, Quinlan comments: 'The key to this whole thing's the dynamite; the killer didn't just want Linneker dead, he wanted him destroyed, annihilated'. The comment is narratively proleptic – the whole 'thing' of the action of the framing of Sanchez hinges on two sticks of dynamite – but at the same time paralipsistic – attention is fixed on the annihilation; the motive of the killer is a feint; as the narrative recognises by providing no answer to the comment in those terms. *Light:* Night-time; modulations of dark – street – and light – back entrance. *Music:* 'Mod-

ernish' – colourless – vibraphone theme coming from inside strip-joint.

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2.12 *Description:* Cut to inside strip-joint, sequence-shot of Quinlan's progress through the place and his brief questioning of the 'Madame'; cut to Quinlan and his men coming out into the street; as they come across, a pianola is heard and, after an insert shot of the pianola playing, Quinlan makes his way towards the source of the sound; cut to him opening the door; there then follows the scene between him and Tanya. *Narrative:* The first stage of the investigation is completed (Quinlan learns nothing) and the narrative then seems to run down. *Character:* Introduction of the 'Madame' (the sole and brief appearance of Zsa Zsa Gabor) and of Tanya. (This segment is analysed in detail below.)

3.13 *Description:* Cut to a high angle shot of Vargas crossing the street in the direction of his hotel; the camera moves rapidly upwards and to the left, briefly glimpsing an open window through which a torch is being shone, until a cut fixes the window opposite and Susan, changing clothes in her hotel room, caught in the beam; the confrontation that follows is treated in variations of shot/reverse shot across the axis of the torch beam. *Narrative:* The man with the torch is Pancho and this is thus the third Grandi aggression. *Exchange:* Interposed between Vargas and Susan, Pancho fixes her as the stripper: framed in the spotlight on the window-stage (Still 12), Susan exits and the light continues to play tantalisingly over the empty space, awaiting her re-entry (Still 13) which comes with a provocative acceptance of the role – 'See any better this way?' (Susan putting herself in the beam); as she finishes dressing, she comments: 'You can turn it off now, buster, you're wasting your battery!' *Repercussions:* (Light) The filmic system depends constantly on light as a material for the realisation of significance, for the realisation of a number of systems and partial systems. This segment witnesses, so to speak, the materialisation of that dependence and mobilises those systems, pulls them into activity. Susan is here attacked by light as earlier (3.4) she had been held by Pancho and Uncle Joe in the alternating rhythm of the neon sign: the first attack is gentle (the rhythm is not insistent, the effect of the alternation is muted), the second is direct, the illumination of Susan from the distance of the look, gaze and object defined by the rod of light; Zita/Susan – the body imaged and 'looked' (nothing happens to Susan in the narrative finally except that Pancho looks; Still 27). Zita, however, is herself alight, 'sizzling': between the two attacks on Susan, her image is destroyed, blackened; in the rod of light, Susan plays Zita's part and turns it round in the assumption of its desire, breaks the distance – unscrewing the light bulb in her room, Susan hurls it across at Pancho – and plunges everything into darkness. In short, from explosion to darkness, a confusion produces a range of figures of light, and for that confusion, the position of Susan (object?

46 subject?), the system knows only two solutions, illumination or extinction; otherwise, there is only an empty margin – the blackness edging the circle of light; the moment of the hand on the light bulb. *Music*: Dramatic scoring: ominous motif on initial shot of Vargas, bongo rhythm takes over with loud insistence – orchestra (saxophone meandering) behind from time to time – and comes to a climax as the light bulb crashes on the floor of Pancho's room.

3A.14 *Description*: Cut as the crash is heard to Vargas opening the door into Susan's room; then four shots for their conversation, ending with their exit. *Narrative*: Tension between Vargas and Susan. *Repercussions*: (*Light*) The whole of the brief exchange between the two centres on the question of the light. Vargas enters the darkness and light floods in from the hall corridor: V 'Suzy, What are you doing here in the dark?' / S 'There isn't any shade on the window' / V 'Well, can we turn the light on now?' / S 'No, we can't' / V 'Why not?' / S (exasperated) 'Because there isn't any bulb any more' / V 'Suzy . . .'; she cuts across him and he follows her out, the door slamming black. Tightly constructed, the scene turns round from the previous segment; the bulb flung at Pancho hits Vargas too (the sound of the crash merges onto the cut) and the shot/reverse shot alternation along the rod of the torch beam is repeated in four shots on the line of the dialogue about the light; the closing darkness of the one becomes the beginning of the other which itself ends in darkness again; Pancho establishes Susan as Zita, Vargas wants her as Suzy (he uses the name as an argument – as, precisely, a position). *Music*: None.

3B.15 *Description*: Cut to Pancho who, looking down from his window, catches Risto in the street below in his torch beam; Risto runs off and there is a chase through the empty streets until he is finally brought to a halt by Uncle Joe and helpers; eight shots with a variety of movements and angles. *Narrative*: Dissension in the Grandi family: Risto bolts because Uncle Joe is angry at the vitriol attack which had not received his authorisation. This dissension, however, has no narrative consequences, being exhausted in this segment and its continuation in 3B.17. *Partitions*: The dissension serves to emphasise the fact of the Grandi family, its ramifications – Risto is Uncle Joe's nephew, the son of his brother (the Grandi arrested thanks to Vargas) – and, once more, its mixedness – is Risto Mexican or American? *Exchange*: Risto's sole action in the film is the throwing of the vitriol. Motive? Obviously (deducing from the premisses of common sense psychology) revenge for the arrest of his father; but what Risto says (in 3B.17) is that he wanted to give Vargas and Susan something to think about on their honeymoon. As Pancho spotlights Susan, so Risto destroys Zita's image – for Vargas? for Susan? *Repercussions*: During the scuffle with Risto, Uncle Joe loses his toupee (his 'rug') and this is stressed again in 3B.17. The 'comedy' of Uncle Joe's person is

a focus on a mixed body, male and female, and this focus, and hence the loss of the hair-piece, is to be climaxed in the scene of his strangulation by Quinlan (IV a). *Light*: Night-time; streets, sky clearing at end. *Music*: None.

3A.16 *Description*: Cut to Susan and Vargas coming downstairs in the hotel; Vargas is called to the telephone in the lobby; three shots, of which the last is a close medium shot of Vargas taking the call. *Narrative*: Tension continues between Vargas and Susan. *Partitions*: V 'This isn't the real Mexico, you know that; all border towns bring out the worst in a country, you know that'. *Repercussions*: While on the phone, Vargas opens his briefcase and checks his gun; the visual stress on this action is a preparation for its answering correspondence, the scene at the motel when he will open his case and find the gun missing (III n). A more classic example of practicability – preparation, fulfilment, hence exhaustion – would be difficult to imagine; but the instance is more than this: metonymically, the checking of the gun is the verification of Susan (the gun is Vargas' position) and its loss is then, exactly, the loss of Susan; the gun becomes a factor in the circulating exchange./ The telephone call has a narrative function (it concerns the investigation) and it fits, over this, into a series that, also, has its force in the movements of exchange (connection/disconnection). *Light*: Lit interior. *Music*: None.

3B.17 *Description*: Cut to the street where the quarrel between Uncle Joe and Risto is in full swing; Uncle Joe turns to look off. *Narrative*: The end of the Risto incident. (For the rest, see commentary at 3B.15.)

3A.18 *Description*: Cut, as Uncle Joe looks, to a very brief long shot of Susan and Vargas seen across the street just inside the hotel entrance. *Light*: Early morning, between night and day. *Music*: None.

3B.19 *Description*: Cut to Uncle Joe who sends a nephew over to Susan with an envelope; brief shot across to the hotel as the nephew leaves on his errand. *Narrative*: The dispatch of the letter. *Exchange*: As Quinlan in 2.7, so Grandi, in the same position, catches Susan in his look. *Light*: Early morning, between night and day. *Music*: None.

3A.20 *Description*: Cut to Susan in the hotel lobby; she comes out to receive the envelope and opens it; explanatory insert, the words 'A souvenir with a million kisses – Pancho' on the back of the photo taken in 3.4. *Narrative*: The delivery of the letter and the 'completion' of the action it involves, since narratively nothing comes of it. *Exchange*: The close-up of the photo developed confirms the framing of Susan and Pancho for us (in the position of the camera) in 3.4. *Repercussions*: In 3.2, Susan was given a letter concerning Pancho; here, she is given a photo-note from Pancho; the chain continues, and breaks: from Susan to image, another chain has begun – the flash-bulb, the torch-beam . . .

48 *Light*: Lit interior; exterior dawn. *Music*: None.

3A.21 Cut to hotel entrance seen front on, Vargas coming out
3B.22 to rejoin Susan; cut to the hotel seen from across the
3A.23 street, Vargas and Susan cross to their car, movement in
3B.24 to them at the car; during the conversation that follows
3A.25 and ends with them driving off, two shots are inserted
3B.26 of Grandi watching, with Risto just behind him; after
the car leaves, three shots of Grandi getting in his car and driving
off in the same direction – dissolve to establishing shot of the
motel. *Narrative*: These six segments are taken in a group as a
result of their coherence; they give the continuation of the tension
between Vargas and Susan, with the decision that the latter should
go to the motel, and of the Grandi aggressions, his exit after them.
Partitions: Vargas wants Susan to go back to Mexico City, she
wants to stay: S 'I'll go to the motel' / V 'What motel?' / S
'Well there must be one somewhere on the American side of the
border' / V 'The American side of the border!' / S 'Well I'll be
safer there and you won't have to worry about me. Did I say the
wrong thing again? !' / V 'No. I suppose it would be nice for a
man in my place to be able to think he could look after his own
wife in his own country'; in every sense, the tension is that of
place. *Exchange*: How can Vargas keep Susan safe? He gives her
to Menzies (to Quinlan) to take to the American motel owned by
Grandi who owns the strip-joint which employed Zita who exploded
– economy and logic begin to turn together. *Light*: Dawn. *Music*:
None.

The preceding commentary, segment by segment, covers the beginning of the film and allows the demonstration of the way in which the narrative is initiated in the context of a number of systems and partial systems, of an overmovement of actions and figures. Demonstrating this, the commentary also enables us to come back to the discussion of the very idea of the 'beginning' in relation to the filmic system.

The habitual definition of that idea is made in connection with the narrative and such a definition is 'structural' in so far as it grasps the beginning by virtue of its position with regard to the other elements of the whole (of, that is, precisely, the narrative action); as Aristotle puts it: 'A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle and an end. A beginning is that which does not necessarily follow anything else . . . ' (*Poetics*, 1450b). In short, a narrative action is a series of elements held in a relation of transformation such that their consecution determines a state S' different to an initial state S; thus: S-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-S'. Evidently, the action includes S and S' (they are defined by it); and equally evidently, the elements articulating – 'carrying' – the transformation are themselves 'little actions' with their own beginnings and endings.

A beginning, therefore, is always a *violation*, the violation or interruption of the homogeneity of S (the homogeneity – S itself – being recognised *from* the violence); in *Touch of Evil*, this is literal: the explosion, the interruption of the long sequence-shot by the abrupt brutality of the shot of the blazing car (car up/camera static // car static/camera in). The narrative transformation is the resolution of the violence, its containment – its *replacing* – in a new homogeneity. ‘Replacement’ there has a double edge: on the one hand, the narrative produces something new, replaces S with S’; on the other, this production is the return of the same, S’ re-replaces S, is the reinvestment of its elements. Hence the constraint of the need for exhaustion: every element must be used up in the resolution; the dispersion the violence provoked must be turned into a re-convergence – which is the action of the transformation, its activity. Ideally, a narrative is the perfect symmetry of this movement; the kiss the explosion postpones is resumed in the kiss of the close as Susan is reunited with Vargas — the same kiss, but delayed, *narrativised*.

There can be no question here of attempting a full study of the history of narrative modes; it may, however, be simply suggested that structurally a narrative depends inevitably on a process of transformation but that the coherence of the transformation brings into play levels of cultural/ideological determination. The presentation above of that coherence in terms of symmetry and exhaustion relied in fact, as the examples from *Touch of Evil* hinted, on a conception of narrative derived from the novel and from classic cinema as a form of the novel; a conception the crux of which is a multiplication of elements in the name of a realism and the extreme pressure of the demand for their unification into a sense, the position of realism. It is on this position that hinges the ideological and economic speculation in narrative (nineteenth century publishing concerns and the novel, Hollywood and the film): the drama – logic and economy of film and novel – is to maintain a violence, a heterogeneity, from the position of the subject; the position of realism is the position of intelligibility and the guarantee of intelligibility is the stability of the subject, thus narrative, dispersion and convergence, becomes the fiction of reality, the form of realism, the separation in position of subject and process, or, since that process for the subject is his division in the symbolic, the separation in position of subject and discourse: the narrative must subsume at once real and enunciation into a whole, the *order* of the subject.

The paradox of such a narrative is then this: aimed at containment, it restates heterogeneity as the constant term of its action – if there is symmetry, there is dissymmetry, if there is resolution, there is violence; it contains as one contains an enemy, holding in place but defensively, and the strategic point is the implacable disjunction of narrative and discourse, *énoncé* and *énonciation*, the impossibility of holding entirely on the subject-position of the one

- 50 the subject-process of the other which then endlessly returns against the specular images of the whole, the clear punctuality of beginning and end that blocks it more or less.

This is the involvement of *Touch of Evil*, its *friction*. The film frames in an action meanings and images that come right in the end, rather as Quinlan frames the criminal, but the framing holds against a force – loss, waste, flow, displacement – that is the impossible problem of the narrative, the overturning which puts into question the simple turn of the action, the finality of its passage from beginning to end.

The beginning of *Touch of Evil* is obvious in its banality, supported as it is by the weight of genre expectation which indicates straightaway the term of the end: murder – the enigma posed/arrest – the enigma solved. Yet this beginning is also the interruption of two sexual relationships mirroring one another as the two sides of a single image – right side: Vargas/Susan/position; wrong side: Linneker/Zita/money; the body in place and the place of the body. So long as the image coheres, one side can be passed for the other: the enigma will be solved by the discovery that Linneker was killed for his money by Sanchez sexually motivated by Marcia, Vargas and Susan thus being assured in their position as outside the problems of money and sexuality; the sides, that is, are kept intact, those problems contained in the narrative. What is catastrophic is confusion, mixture, exchange across the bar of the image, the destruction of its coherence; from then on, the narrative says more than it contains, producing as it were, the figures of its distress. Thus *Touch of Evil*: the explosion starts an action that is not that of the solution of the murder but that of the nature of 'position' (Vargas/Quinlan), easy enough were it not for the fact that the film continues with the initial image in an endless deflection of the new action; the sides of the image apart, the elements begin a pattern of exchange which poses, for instance, the problem of the relations between position, money and sexuality and to which the film can only reply by a kind of demonstration of its panic. The filmic system of *Touch of Evil* is that panic, that demonstration.

V

The purpose of the commentary was to show the way in which the development of the narrative action, its initiation, is immediately the setting in motion, the construction, of a number of systems that function as the figures of that action, supporting it or displacing it. The drawback of such a commentary is its relative crudeness, its enforced inattention to this dual operation in the detail of the film, the particular movement of the segments. In what follows an attempt is made to remedy this by looking care-

fully at one of the segments from the beginning section (2.12) and then at its rhyming answer at the close of the film (IV e). The choice of segment 2.12, moreover, was dependent on its gripping together of systems and figures as a moment of loss, of narrative waste.

As always, the difficulty is that of presentation. The strategy adopted in the present instance is draconian: the two segments are tabled one after the other and a series of comments is given in note form towards the reading of the tables. This, which is a necessity of space, is also valid in itself: the writing of this part of the analysis is nowhere if not in the tables and their reading.

Remarks

Time. There are various discrepancies between different copies of the film; times given are approximate – what is important is the exactitude of the proportionate length of the shots, the time of their interrelation.

Camera movement. Where movement is very slight, a bar is placed over the symbol M.

Shot scale. Once again, it is proportion that is important here and the various standard terms are used relatively to the differentiations of scale defined pertinently by the segments.

Character movement. This is essentially the presence within a shot of a change of place by one or more characters, a transference – however minimal – of the bodily person. The minus sign cancelled by an oblique stroke allows for the case of Vargas in the second segment: extremely active on the scaffolding, Vargas moves without really shifting his place.

Significant character look angle records schematically the play of the direction of the 'look' of characters within a shot; the significance will be discussed in relation to shot perspective, to the systems they create between them; this and the following column should thus be read in conjunction with one another.

Perspective position (vision). The symbols give the point of view of the shot, N referring to a third person (narrative or neutral) position: where narrative and character positions come together, the character symbol is placed before the N (eg T/N); where the narrative sees with a character position but from behind, the character symbol is placed after (eg N/Q). The use of these symbols, their systematic determinations, the whole question of point of view and subjective vision will be discussed in detail at a later stage of this analysis.

It should also be noted that all the shots are separated from one another by simple cuts.

Table 1. I h (2.12) From strip-joint to Tanya's

Shot, Time	Description	Camera movement: Fixed	Shot scale	Character movement in shot: + / -	Significant character look angle	Perspective position (vision)
1. 0.00/0.00	Sequence-shot. From an initial framing showing Quinlan at the rear end of the long bar of the cabaret/strip-joint and giving a general view of the locale (depth of focus), the camera tracks to follow him the length of the bar, turning behind him round the netting curtain at the end and stopping to face a flight of stairs as the Madame comes down. After a brief dialogue, Quinlan turns and exits left, leaving the Madame watching as he goes, together with the DA, Schwartz, et al, who themselves prepare to depart.					
(Sull 1)						
(Sull 2)						
(Sull 3)		M [Opening and closing on static framings]	Variable [From full shot to near shot]	+	Madame as theatre of all eyes, focussing the looks which follow Quinlan's progress to centre on her.	N [Narrative description]
	Principal characters: Quinlan, Schwartz, DA, Madame. Dialogue: Snatches of conversation with characters moving in and out of frame as the camera tracks; Madame 'Zita? I didn't know her. She only joined this show a few days ago' / Q 'We're wasting our time around here' / DA 'Oh! I wouldn't say that! ... (to Madame) Well, good night, my dear.' Music: Vibraphone, colourless rhythm.					
2. 0.28/0.28	Full shot onto the back entrance of the cabaret seen from over the street; camera static. Quinlan comes out, followed by the others, and moves across down right; camera tracking along and in to frame					

	Quinlan in near shot as he listens to the sound of a piano; he goes off right as the others come up into frame. Characters: Quinlan, Schwartz, DA. Dialogue: DA (indicating the opposite direction) 'Hank! We go this way, you know?' Q (come to a halt) 'Tanya's still open for business?' Musical: Pianola, gaining in volume as progress down the street; 'Tanya's tune.'	M [Opening and closing on static framings]	Variable [From full shot to near shot]	+	Shot ends with Quinlan looking off down right towards source of music.	Q →	N
3. 0.47/0.19 (Still 4)	Near shot with tilt of pianola playing inside Tanya's. Characters: None. Dialogue: None. Musical: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune.'	F	NS	-		—	N
4. 0.54/0.07 (Still 5)	Full shot onto street seen from the entrance to Tanya's across the raised porchway-cum-sidewalk; camera static. The street is empty, paper blows from left to right, then Quinlan enters left and the camera briefly tracks to re-centre through the porch as he turns in and steps into near shot, leaving the others who have also come along the street. Framed in the porch entrance in low angle, Quinlan, chewing at a candy-bar, pauses before exiting left into camera. Characters: Quinlan (Schwartz), DA, Menzies seen momentarily). Dialogue: None. Musical: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune.'	M [Opening and closing on static framing]	Variable [From full shot to close-up]	+	Shot ends with Quinlan looking off (slightly left) into camera towards entrance to Tanya's.	Q →	N
5. 1.25/0.31 (Still 6)	Quinlan from behind right in near shot opens the door and enters Tanya's. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: None. Musical: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune.'	F	NS	+	Quinlan looking away from camera diagonally across (right to left) into Tanya's.	Q →	N/Q

Shot, Time	Description	Camera movement/ Fixed	Shot scale	Character movement in shot: + / -	Significant character look angle	Perspective position (vision)
6. 1.27/0.02 (Still 7)	Reverse shot. From the far corner of Tanya's parlour, over a table scattered with coins, Quinlan is seen looking into the room and then turning away. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	MS	+	Quinlan looking into camera from door into room (shot angle returns Q's look from the place of the absent Tanya).	N → [From the position of the absent Tanya]
7. 1.33/0.06 (Still 8)	Reversing again, along the line of his movements, Quinlan is seen from behind right in near shot as he exits into the hall; the camera tracks a slight distance with him and frames across a section of the hall; Tanya enters from the left and is given in medium shot with Quinlan, turned towards her, occupying the right of the frame; between them, a pastoralish, gallant, picture of a swain courting his lover. Characters: Quinlan, Tanya. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	M [Slight movement]	MS	+	Tanya facing Quinlan in hall.	T ↗ Q N/Q
8. 1.44/0.11 (Still 9)	Quinlan seen in close shot, framed between two lamp shades. (Note: this shot inaugurates a shot/reverse shot series with a certain dissymmetry: Quinlan is always seen from Tanya, but Tanya is sometimes seen from behind Quinlan). Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	Quinlan into camera right towards Tanya off.	T/N Q ↗ .
9. 1.45/0.01	Tanya in close shot; she turns off right. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: T 'We're closed'.	F	CU	+	Tanya into camera slightly left towards Quinlan off; then away.	Q/N T ↗ .

10. 1.54/0.09	Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'. As 8. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-		T/N
11. 1.58/0.04 (Still 11)	Quinlan from behind looking down hall; Tanya re-enters from the right carrying a large saucepan and is seen over Quinlan's shoulder in close medium-shot (slight re-framing movement). Characters: Quinlan, Tanya. Dialogue: Q 'You been cooking at this hour?' / T 'Just cleaning up'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	M	MS	+	Tanya fading Quinlan 	N/Q
12. 2.08/0.10	As 8, 10. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q 'Have you forgotten your old friend?'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-		T/N
13. 2.13/0.05 (Still 10)	As 11. Tanya recognises Quinlan; she turns away down the hall. Characters: Quinlan, Tanya. Dialogue: T 'I told you we were closed' / Q 'I'm Hank Quinlan' / T (looking him up and down) 'I didn't recognise you. You should lay off those candy bars'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	MS	+		N/Q
14. 2.25/0.12	As 8, 10, 12. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q 'It's either candy or the hooch'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-		N

Shot, Time	Description	Camera movement/ Fixed	Shot scale	Character movement in shot: + / -	Significant character look angle	Perspective position (vision)
15. 2.28/0.03	Tanya turns back to face camera in close medium-shot. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: Q (off) 'Must say I wish it was . . .' Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CMS	+	T →	Q/N
16. 2.32/0.04	As 8, 10, 12, 14. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q '... your chlll I was getting fat on. Anyway you're sure looking good'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	Q →	T/N
17. 2.37/0.05	As 15. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: T 'You're a mess, honey'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CMS	-	T →	Q/N
18. 2.42/0.05	As 8, 10, 12, 14, 16. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q 'That pianola sure brings back memories'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	Q →	T/N
19. 2.46/0.04	As 15, 17; then Tanya moves right, the camera tracking with her into close-up. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: 'The customers go for it; it's old, it's new. We have the television too. We run movies. What can I offer you?' Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	M	CMS - CU	+	T →	Q/N
20. 3.01/0.15	As 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18. Characters: Quinlan.					

		F	CU	-	Q	T/N
21. 3.04/0.03	As the end of 19. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: T 'That happened on your side of the border'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	T	Q/N
22. 3.08/0.04	As 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q 'In a place like this you can hear...'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	Q	T/N
23. 3.12/0.04	As 19, 21. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: T 'I heard the explosion'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	T	Q/N
24. 3.16/0.04	As 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q 'Yeah, Well, when this case is over I'll come round some night and sample some of your chilli'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	Q	T/N
25. 3.24/0.08	As 19, 21, 23. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: T 'Better be careful, it may be too hot for you'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	T	Q/N
26. 3.28/0.04	As 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24; Quinlan moves off left, turning away from camera. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q 'Mmmmf'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	+	Q	T/N

27. 3.31/0.03	As 19, 21, 23, 25; Tanya moves off left into camera, after Quinlan. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; Tanya's tune. 3.34/0.03 Shot ends.	F	CU - BCU	+		T	N
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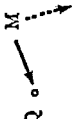
Table 2. IV e From Tanya's to street

Shot, Time	Description	Camera movement: Movement/ Fixed	Shot scale	Character movement in shot: + / -	Significant character look angle	Perspective position (vision)
1. 0.00/0.00 (Still 38)	Dissolve from preceding shot of Menzies' face (scene in police station when he shows Vargas Quinlan's cane) to Tanya in near shot sitting at the table in her parlour doing the accounts. Characters: Tanya/(Menzies). Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; syncopated, jaunty theme.	F	NS	-	 Menzies looks for Tanya for Quinlan (towards the door through which he - Quinlan and then Menzies - will enter).	N
2. 0.06/0.06 (Still 39)	Quinlan in the pianola room sitting on the right with a bottle at his side in the foreground. [Compare Still 21 - Q is now in Tanya's place]. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; as 1.	F	NMS	-	 In Tanya's place, Quinlan's look remains vacant, without object.	N
3. 0.12/0.06	Vargas and Menzies outside on the scaffolding across the street from Tanya's prepare the bugging - Menzies is fitted up with microphone and transmitting apparatus. Characters: Vargas, Menzies.					

Dialogue: Menzies insists that Susan had come to no harm, that she is being driven across the border into Mexico, that the best thing would be to leave. V. How can I leave until my wife's name is clean, clean! What do you think you're carrying that microphone for? Music: None.	F	CMS	-	Facing the camera, Vargas and Menzies turn to one another in the course of their preparations.	N
4. 0.43/0.31 As 1. (This shot inaugurates a shot/reverse shot series). Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	NS	-	Tanya at the table, towards the door off in the diagonally opposite corner of the room.	N
5. 0.45/0.02 (Still 40) Reverse shot. Looking from the far corner of the parlour over the table, Quinlan is seen entering. [Compare 1 h Shot 6 and Still 7]. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q. 'What's my fortune?' Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	MS	+	Quinlan looking into camera from door into room (shot angle returns Q's look from Tanya's place).	T/N
6. 0.51/0.06 Tanya close up. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	T	Q/N
7. 0.55/0.04 (Still 42) Quinlan is seen from the table moving into the room: low angle, Tanya's perspective looking up. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q. 'You've been reading the cards, haven't you?' Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	M [Slight reframing]	CMS	+	Q	T/N
8. 1.01/0.06 As 1, 4. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: 'I've been doing the accounts'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	NS	-	T	Q/N

Shot, Time	Description	Camera movement: Fixed	Shot scale	Character movement in shot: + / -	Significant character look angle	Perspective position (vision)
9. 1.03/0.02 (Still 44)	As 7, but Quinlan is nearer the table and he bends over it into the camera. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q 'Come on, read my future for me'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	NCMS	+	Q →	T/N
10. 1.05/0.02 (Still 45)	Big close up of Quinlan's hand spreading out a pack of Tarot cards over the table. Characters: Quinlan (metonymy). Dialogue: Q 'future for me' (i.e. the dialogue given in 9 runs over into this shot). Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	BCU			T/N
11. 1.07/0.02	As 6. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: T 'You haven't got any'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	T ↗	Q/N
12. 1.12/0.05	As 9, Quinlan looking down. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q 'What? What do you mean?' Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	NCMS	-	Q →	T/N
13. 1.15/0.03	As 6, 11. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: T 'Your future is all used up'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	T ↗	Q/N
14. 1.20/0.05	As 9, 12. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	NCMS	-	Q →	T/N

15. 1.22/0.02	As 6, 11, 13. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: T 'Why don't you go home?' Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	F	CU	-	T ↗	Q/N
16. 1.28/0.06	Full shot onto the street seen from the entrance to Tanya's across the porchway-sidewalk; Menzies approaches from the left and looks away off right. [Compare 1) (a Slot 4]. Characters: Menzies. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola (less volume); 'Tanya's tune'.	F	FS	+	M ↗	N
17. 1.34/0.06	Vargas on the scaffolding, the camera moving into medium shot. Characters: Vargas. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola (distant); 'Tanya's tune'.	M	MS	+	V ↗	N/M
18. 1.37/0.03	Crane shot. Menzies comes up onto porch and turns away from the camera to look off right. Characters: Menzies. Dialogue: M 'Vargas! Vargas! ...' Music: Pianola as 16; 'Tanya's tune'.	M	FS	+	M ↗	N
19. 1.47/0.10	Vargas in near shot tuning the receiving apparatus. Characters: Vargas. Dialogue: M (over receiver) '... I don't know if you can hear me over ...' Music: Pianola (over receiver); 'Tanya's tune'.	F	NS	+	V ↗	N/M

Shot, Time	Description	Camera movement: Movement/Fixed	Shot scale	Character movement in shot: +/—	Significant character look angle	Perspective position (vision)
20. 1.49/0.02 (Still 46)	Big close up of receiver, Vargas' hand on the dial, with a reframing movement to show the speaker alone. Characters: Vargas (metonymy). Dialogue: M (over receiver) "... that piano music but I'll get him out of there so you can hear". Music: Pianola (over receiver); Tanya's tune.	M	BCU		—	N
21. 1.52/0.03	As 18. Menzies turns and moves off towards the camera into Tanya's. Characters: Menzies. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; Tanya's tune.	F	IS	+		N
22. 1.58/0.06 (Still 47)	Tanya's parlour seen from across the table, Quinlan sitting to the left of the entry from the hall; Menzies briefly appears in the doorway. [Compare Shot 5, Still 40; I h Shot 6 and Still 7]. Characters: Quinlan, Menzies. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; Tanya's tune.	F	MS	+		T/N N/Q [Q seen seeing M]
23. 2.03/0.05	As 1, 4, 8. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; Tanya's tune.	F	NS	—		N
24. 2.09/0.06 (Still 48)	As 22. Quinlan gets up and moves with difficulty—drink, no cane—towards the door [Compare I h Shot 6]. Characters: Quinlan.	F	MS	+		T/N N/Q

Shot, Time	Description	Camera movement/ Fixed	Shot scale	Character movement in shot: + / -	Significant character look angle	Perspective position (vision)
29. 2.47/0.07 (Still 53)	Vargas on the scaffolding ducks back. Characters: Vargas. Dialogue: M (over receiver) '... of waiting. Hank. There's some questions you've got to answer.' Music: Pianola (very faint over receiver); 'Tanya's tune'.	F	MS	+	V ↗	N
30. 2.50/0.03 (Still 54)	Extreme low angle shot looking over the sidewalk steps to Quinlan coming out of Tanya's into camera, the camera moving up to frame him in a near low angle medium shot. Characters: Quinlan. Dialogue: Q 'Questions? I need a drink'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	M	NFS	+	Q ↗	N
31. 2.54/0.04 (Still 55) (Still 56)	Quinlan is seen from the side and the camera turns behind him, moving up in a crane shot that finishes by framing him from behind in a high angle shot that looks past him to Menzies waiting in the street. Quinlan goes down into the street and the two men move off right, the camera tracking briefly as they leave, still in high angle. Characters: Quinlan, Menzies. Dialogue: M 'You've had enough' / Q 'That's what Tanya keeps telling me — how much is enough?'. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'.	M	(Variable) (NMS - FS)	+		N
32. 3.02/0.06 (Still 57)	Tanya coming through from the hall into the pianola room pauses in the doorway where Quinlan had paused in Shot 27. Characters: Tanya. Dialogue: None. Music: Pianola; 'Tanya's tune'. Shot ends.	F	MS	+	T ↗	N

The segment balances over the movement from strip-joint to Tanya's, crossing the street from one to the other, building a series of oppositions.

Treated in a long single shot, the scene in the strip-joint records an action narratively pertinent (the search for information concerning the woman killed in the explosion); broken into twenty-three shots, the scene in Tanya's refracts an inaction, the loss of the 'narrative'—what makes Quinlan enter is not at all the explosion but the pianola. The three shots separating them are the progress of this loss, a kind of narrative running down: Shot 2—the exit into the street, the isolation of Quinlan as the camera tracks in, his detachment from those following as he moves out of the frame they are about to enter; Shot 3—the brief (relative to the two surrounding shots) punctuation of the pianola, the 'pull inside', which empties the film of action and character (the first shot in the film in which objects appear undiegetically; as if to stress this, the pianola is playing away, itself its own momentum, the keys going up and down), operates an enclosure (compare the space of the street, the depth and area of the strip-joint); Shot 4—the playing out of the loss: opening on the emptiness of the street, waste paper blowing across, it gives once more, in a lengthy slowness, the detachment of Quinlan, ends by isolating him in the arc of the porchway entrance. 'We're wasting our time around here,' comments Quinlan in the strip-joint; in Tanya's, time—the narrative—peters out.

Strip-joint/Tanya's. What is here described as a strip-joint (Zita's place of work—'20 sizzling strippers') is also described as cabaret and night club; it is, in fact, 'Grandi's Rancho Grande' and is the scene of the deal between Grandi and Quinlan, as well as that of Vargas' furious attack on the Grandi boys at the end of the film (III d, IV c); locale, therefore, of some of the major narrative events. As the Madame (for want of a better word), Zsa Zsa Gabor is literally *the star*: poised on the stairs, silver star gleaming beside her, she is illuminated smoothly, theatrically, flawless. The final moment of the shot frames her in this theatricality: accompanied by her musicians, she stands flanked by Schwartz in the wings and by the DA as stage-door johnny. The latter, indeed, spends most of the shot verbally patting the girls; it is his world (the world of 'the girls'), he is dressed for the part (the 'monkey suit'), his white shirt-front setting off the lustre of Gabor's skin, her 'blonde-ness'; 'Oh! I wouldn't say that!', he quickly interjects when Quinlan talks of them wasting their time. *Images* of women dominate (remember Zita's outside), with Gabor as the climax. The opening shows Quinlan next to a hostess dressed in a tight, low-cut silk sheath; progressing up the bar, he passes two more hostesses posed for inspection; then the picture of a woman stretched smilingly, invitingly, over the arch that leads through

66 to the room beyond, her skirt up, pointing to Gabor coming down the stairs. In this *line* of women (Still 1), Gabor has only to play herself, the star, the image – Zsa Zsa.

Zsa Zsa, Susan, Zita. There are two roles for Susan: be Suzy for Vargas, be Zita for Pancho; two roles, or the same role (the problem is the explosion). The hostesses are images for Susan (the clothes of the third are simply one step – the neckline – removed from hers and in the motel she too will have her silk 'sheath'); filmically, she is Zsa Zsa (imagine the lights gone down in the theatre of Still 3, the beginning of the act, and then look at Still 12), the jubilation of the look (the DA in Still 3) or its panic (the motel clerk in Still 15); which is to say that the narrative has only *cinema* – the distance of fetishism – as a knowledge of sexuality: Susan, character, is Zsa Zsa, star, *film image*; Susan's access to desire is thus the passage of character to actress, to Janet Leigh star, pin-up (Still 18); desire in position. We are in a kind of Möbius strip where the narrative turns us from side to side in the single band of the imaginary – the fiction of the film is the reality of the fiction of cinema, the success of its institution.

Strip-joint/Tanya's. One term alone can describe Tanya's: it is a *maison close*. The space of the strip-joint-cum-cabaret (length of shot, distance travelled) gives way to the confined area of Tanya's, rooms elaborate with bric-a-brac, crowded with paintings (as against the single image in the cabaret), lights shaded (contrast the neon sign and the naked bulb in Still 3), ceilings, mirrors, boxes, flower-stands. The opposition continues round the characters: Madame/Tanya, blonde/dark, match of skin and velvet into a perfection carefully traced with jewellery/ impossible costume, encumbered with ornament, hung with beads; as well as round the music: the innocuous vibraphone/ the pianola tune. Here again, the filmic reference is decisive: Dietrich, the world of Von Sternberg, of the past (Quinlan's, and Welles' – *Follow the Boys* in 1944); house of dreams (Titania, Fairy Queen of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).

Decisive but not exhaustive with regard to the consideration of the functioning of *Touch of Evil*; what is important is the work of this reference in the system of the film: Tanya is not simply apart, she is also part of that system's circulation (in the chain of names, for instance: Zi – ta – nya).

Entering Tanya's, Quinlan passes from film to film, from image to mirror, action to inaction, and the narrative wastes. The 'time' of the scene in Tanya's is not the past but disjunction; no image fits – the whole scene crystallises on a difficulty of recognition; instead the pictures multiply times in a ceaseless play of repetition and difference (witness the duplication of character and picture in Still 8) and point of view hesitates (the sense of Still 7 where we take Tanya's place as the absence of the recognition Quinlan seeks, as the mirror of disjunction): the sexuality of the scenario – the

timbre of Dietrich, the chili, the shifting positions – against the image of sexuality – Gabor on the stairs; and with Quinlan's impotence as the turn of both, or Vargas': Quinlan edged out in Shot 1 (Still 3), immobilised from Shots 8 to 26 (Still 9); Vargas vanished from the segment.

Segments I h (2.12) and IV e

Raymond Bellour has emphasised the way in which the construction of progression in classic film depends on narrative units that are symmetrically bound in a certain dissymmetry, regulated oppositions between closure and openness ('The Obvious and the Code,' *Screen* v 15 n 4, Winter 1974/5). This holds true for the two segments under present consideration and equally for their interrelation: from one end of the film to the other, they 'reply', balance, overbalance.

Of equivalent length and shotage (3' 34", 27 shots/3' 02", 32 shots), the two segments occupy structural positions placing the one as the reverse of the other, its rhyme. The movement of the first is from the street through the cabaret into Tanya's, the running down of the narrative; that of the second is from Tanya's out into the street, the restoration of the narrative.

The detail of this rhyming is given in the tabular descriptions of the segments; suffice it to stress its beauty (beauty in classic film is precisely the term of such regulation). What will here be noted are the points of the dissymmetry, the repercussions in so far as they figure the crisis of the system.

Running down/restoration. The scenes in Tanya's have no narrative function; when Quinlan enters Tanya's, he leaves the investigation; when he leaves Tanya's, he enters the resolution of the problem of the investigation. Between the two, there is one other scene in Tanya's, III k, sandwiched by the Grandi boys circling round Susan in the motel and the final assault: Tanya is sitting smoking in the pianola room, the phone rings off, she gets up (Still 21); Menzies at the end of the line, trying to find Quinlan (Still 22); Tanya in close-up in the hall, holding the phone, a hat hanging on the peg beside her head, a man's voice off calling for her – T 'Now Sergeant! '/ Off 'Tanya! Hey Tanya! '/ T 'I'll be right there. . . . Now what would Hank Quinlan be doing here? '/ M (over phone) 'Used to be his hole-up place . . . two or three days with a case of whiskey '/ T 'That was years ago – now he's on candy bars'; Menzies as previously – M 'Not tonight he isn't'; Tanya (Still 23), she puts the phone down, her dress is off her shoulder, and exits in the direction of the voice, the shot hanging on in the empty space with the hat (Still 24). It can be seen clearly enough how this segment serves as mediation, switchpoint of the exchange between the two main segments: the peg (Still 10) is filled (Still 23); Tanya's place (Still 21) passed to Quinlan (Still 39);

68 the candy bars of the one become the drink of the other over Menzies' 'Not tonight he isn't'; etc. The crux is Menzies, who dissolves into the start of the second of the main segments (compare Stills 22 and 38: same position, same angle, same framing). Where is Quinlan? Menzies seeks him with Tanya? for Tanya? against Tanya? The construction of the first segment – the banking of point of view (N, 3rd person; Q/N or T/N, from Quinlan or from Tanya; N/Q, with Quinlan: examples of the four respectively – Stills 4, 10, 9, 11) – is a scene of recognition (non-recognition) and rejection; Quinlan's place is a fantasy past and future, it has no present. When Menzies phones, Quinlan cannot be there, the place is taken (voice, hat); neither can the narrative, left hanging in the air (Still 24). The way out *for the narrative* is to reinstate position by debanking the blocking movement of point of view: Menzies is the agent of this; and the process of the segment is thus the unhooking of the vacancy of Shot 2 (Still 39): Quinlan absent in Tanya's place, the aporie once more of their conversation (Shot 10 the definition of the impossibility; see the figure sketched between Stills 7, 24, 45); from there the doubling by Menzies of Quinlan (compare Stills 7 and 47); the relinearisation – T/N N/Q, N/M-V. At the end of the line, Quinlan is pulled back into the narrative (Shot 20 – Still 46 – is in this respect the reverse equivalent to Shot 3 – Still 4 – of the first segment: Quinlan's reconnection; Menzies indeed talks of the need to get him away from the pianola), back into the terms of the conflict with Vargas where he can be killed for their resolution, the return of the image (left behind in the strip-joint), the restitution of Susan as good object, the end of the film.

VI

No film is more obvious than *Touch of Evil*: with a classic unity of time and place, the action concentrates the struggle between Vargas and Quinlan. The narrative causes no difficulty, it is the context of a higher moral concern; the exploration of the relations of law and justice and of the inevitable evil that results from their divorce; 'Welles examines the price of illegitimate power, however pure its motive' (J McBride: *Orson Welles*, London 1972, p 139). It is this exploration which is crystallised by Vargas' words to Quinlan during the scene in the hotel room (III i): 'A policeman's job is only easy in a police state – that's the whole point, Captain. Who's the boss, the cop or the law?' The genius of the film is then the demonstration of Vargas' point in all its facets, the total picture it gives: 'The camera creates a moral labyrinth in which the characters must struggle, ironically unaware of the depth of their dilemma' (McBride, *op cit*, p 13). Awareness, producing the

irony of the characters' unawareness, is the position of the author or of the spectator placed in that position; interpretation, the mode of that awareness, focusses on the complexity of the struggle, its ramifications, on, for example, the magnificent stature of Quinlan and the hard poverty of Vargas who has 'no comprehension of the moral beauty which underlies Quinlan's warped behaviour' (*ibid*, p 136). A further step and this becomes the discovery of the Welles 'thematic', the real meaning of the film beneath the circumstances of the narrative context: 'In its deep thematic pattern, *Touch of Evil*, despite its detective-story alibi, can be seen as a master work of Orson Welles' (Bazin, *op cit*, p 115). If considered superficially the story seems to oppose the honest official and the rotten cop, a more profound reading identifies the Faustian strength of Quinlan, his Shakespearian immensity, the Wellesian figure par excellent: 'It is the tension created between the grandeur of the hero and the moral option we have to take against and in spite of that grandeur that makes Welles' works tragedies' (*ibid*, p 119).

Welles himself understands the film mainly at the level characterised by a Bazin as 'superficial' – see the interview with him in *Cahiers du cinéma* n 84 (June 1958): Quinlan is 'without ambiguity' – 'What is personal in the film is my hatred of police abuse of its power', 'the angle from which the film should be seen is that, whatever he says, Vargas is my spokesman'; all that one can have is a certain sympathy for Quinlan, for his 'human failings' (the psychological explanation of his behaviour in the film: he frames suspects because his wife's murderer escaped justice).

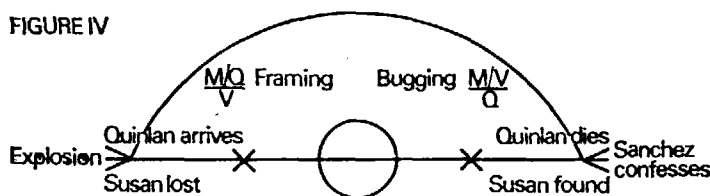
The question here is in no sense to refuse these interpretations, to which systems in the film clearly respond (and which are susceptible to straight ideological analysis); it is evident, to take a simple instance, that Quinlan is played according to a system of 'Shakespearian-ness' climaxing in the final blood-washing (Welles' last Hollywood film had after all been *Macbeth* just ten years earlier). Even less is it a question of judging between them; the views of Welles and Bazin are anyway entirely homogeneous, as the latter recognises by the very postulation of superficial and deep levels, as the former acknowledges by doubling the spokesman Vargas with his own presence for Quinlan (the straight ideological analysis would note, however, that neither make any mention of the dramatisation of the law/justice exploration over the American/Mexican tension). What is important is to grasp the terms of the assumption of the narrative coherence (which is to begin an analysis of ideology in its unconscious rather than its pre-conscious formations). The film is crystal clear, but at a cost, which is the system of the film. It is even tempting to give that cost a name (since it is this name which the Vargas-Quinlan interpretations never fail to omit), 'Susan': the object for restitution (of restitution) with which the narrative has constantly to reckon, figure of the expense (economy

Let us come back to the idea of narrative resolution. Such resolution depends on a dual process of transformation and exchange; the exhaustion of the discourse being the economy of the conversion between the one and the other, the order of redeployment (no waste). In this respect, resolution can be defined not just with regard to the final solution but over the whole of the narrative: at every moment the narrative operates by a powerful and systematic (systematising) tendency to balance (as one 'balances the books'), the construction of units of equilibrium of exchange/transformation. To say this, moreover, is to stress that the operation of that tendency divides up the text in a multitude of extents, large and small units, and across the range of matters of expression. Examples: the structural rhyme of the two Tanya segments realised in a play of repetition and differentiation over all the matters of expression; the system of high/low-angle shots round Quinlan (low-angle until the moment of the deal with Grandi, reconfirmation of the high-angle domination – Quinlan's 'fall' – at the close of the second main Tanya segment), which is itself intersected with other angle systems (the first Tanya segment cuts to a high-angle shot of Vargas, the second to a high-angle shot of Quinlan from Vargas' point of view); the systematic use of the bar (Quinlan moves up it – Vargas smashes Risto back down it, and the deal there with Grandi is the turning point of the exchange in the narrative between the two); the close-up emphasis on the notice in the hotel not to leave anything behind except the key (Quinlan leaves his cane, the key to the crime) repeats the notice in the blind woman's shop not to take anything. The examples are so many signifiers of the order of the narrative, of the position of the discourse in that order, its disposition.

The last point is crucial. The relative position of narrative and discourse is fundamental to the economy of the narrative and that position – the economy – is the exhaustion of the one by the other. It is not that the discourse must disappear; rather, that it must only appear as, precisely, the disposition of the narrative, from which it may be rethickened a little as the position of a style (narrative + style = *Touch of Evil*). All the habitual paradigms of discussion of film – content/form, content/technique, content/cinema, signified/signifier even – are locked in this positionality. Hence the obligation for film analysis to pose its object differently.

The major examples (the most obvious) of this process of transformation in exchange are, of course, those realised in the relations of characters and action; for the narrative of *Touch of Evil*: the bands of the conflict Quinlan/Vargas, the exchange of Menzies; a simple representation is provided in Figure IV.

FIGURE IV

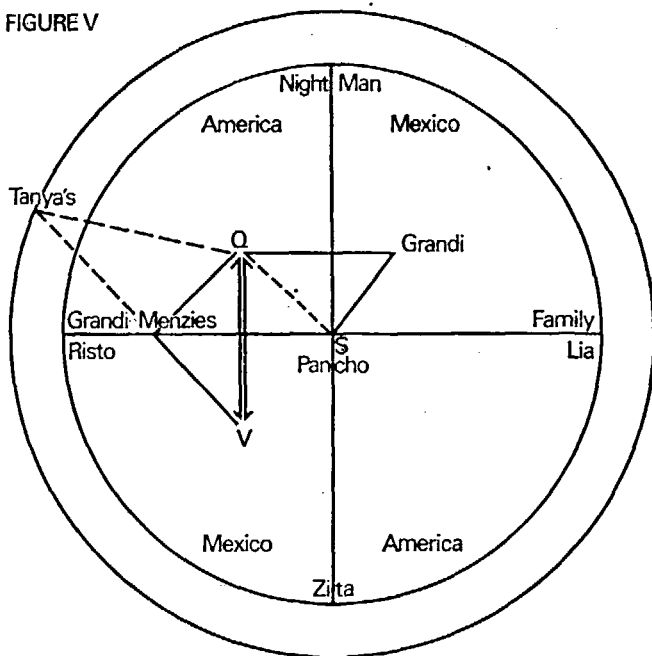


Within the curve described by the initial problem (the explosion) and its solution (Sanchez reported to have confessed) unfolds the narrative of the confrontation between Vargas' justice and Quinlan's brutality (at this level the solution of the initial problem is an irony – Quinlan framed the right man – and an added force to the message – justice must be guaranteed for the guilty as well as for the innocent). This narrative runs from the arrival of Quinlan on the scene of the explosion to his death after the recording of his admissions (*his* confession) and is marked by Vargas' loss of Susan and their reunion at the close. The turning points of the narrative progression are the discovery by Vargas of the framing of Sanchez and then of Quinlan's guilt in the murder of Grandi; the first initiating the plot against Susan (Quinlan retaliates), the second the beginning of the end (Quinlan trapped). For both, Menzies' position is fundamental, the point of a formal pattern of exchange: in the first Menzies is with Quinlan against Vargas (the agent of the framing, Menzies constantly tries to get Quinlan to answer Vargas' charges, himself tears up the notes Vargas makes in the Records Office), in the second he is with Vargas against Quinlan (he shows Vargas the cane, helps Vargas with the recording, shoots Quinlan to protect Vargas); the cane is the figure of exchange: returning the cane to Quinlan in II d, Menzies passes it to Vargas in IV d.

The exchange of Menzies has its own action, its own rhythm, forms what might be seen as a narrative drama – 'the rejection of Menzies' – with its own units: II e – the ecstasy of the discovery of the dynamite and the partnership with Quinlan (M near medium-shot, face creased with smiles 'Well Hank has done it again! He's nailed his man!'/ Q off 'Thanks to you, partner'/ M 'Mel'); II f – Menzies pushed out by the intrusion of Grandi (Q 'What are you waiting for?'); III d – the deal with Grandi, Quinlan's new partnership (G 'In this deal, we're partners'); III h – the attempt to get Quinlan back; III k – Menzies unable to find Quinlan; III m – the defence of Quinlan against Vargas and the collapse in despair; IV a – Quinlan, with Grandi, rings Menzies, shouts at his despair;

The narrative of the Vargas/Quinlan conflict is accompanied by this narrative of Menzies which is its motor, its movement: the exchange of Menzies from Quinlan to Vargas is its resolution; in the final scene, Menzies has become a walking 'Mike', Vargas instrument, and Quinlan shoots him *as* Vargas (composition in frame: Menzies drops to the ground revealing Vargas in his place behind), just as he then shoots Quinlan for Vargas. The Menzies narrative, however, is more than simply *this* exchange. 'He loved him,' says Tanya of Menzies' relationship with Quinlan, and the whole of his narrative is offered in terms of a rejection in love, an amorous crisis of which his collapse is the climax (Still 29); whence his split in the second of the main Tanya segments – he is in Tanya's place, the place of Quinlan's search, and in Vargas', the narrative search for Quinlan: Stills 38 and 47; he is Tanya (the dissolve) and Mike (the bug). We come back here to that excess of exchange detailed in certain of its figures in the commentary on the beginning of the film. Figure V is a way of writing the excess against its omission in the simple narrative line of Figure IV, forced to leave as a blank circle the points where the exchange meets Susan.

FIGURE V



The opposition between Quinlan and Vargas passes through the exchange of Menzies and this is the condition of the restitution of Susan (the kiss interrupted and resumed): Menzies takes Susan to the motel and returns to give Quinlan the cane; Menzies gives Vargas the cane and thereby returns Susan (innocents her). The narrative problem of law and justice is also expressed as a problem of husband and wife (Vargas and Susan are on honeymoon); 'law' and 'husband' being satisfactory terms in so far as they subsume adequately 'justice' and 'wife', in so far as they are *full, unified*, which indeed is the definition of *order*. It follows that the perversion of order is the division of law and justice explainable in its turn as the division of man and wife; if Quinlan is crooked, it is *because* his wife was strangled, leaving him as 'Citizen Cane' (a psychoanalysis of *Welles* would have to pause on the name *Susan* as a substitute for the 'Connie' of the novel).

This psychological explanation works for the economy of the narrative but does no more than focus the logic of that economy (rather as a screen memory holds and displaces). When Menzies returns with the cane, he gives Quinlan it *and* Susan *and* Grandi (Still 16 – Menzies brings Grandi in: Q 'Who've you got here?' / M 'I forgot to give you your cane'; at the moment of the exchange of the cane, both grasping it, Menzies is uttering the words 'Mrs Vargas'); when he passes the cane to Vargas, he returns Susan and Quinlan as the real strangler. What is psychological explanation for the narrative is fantasy in the movement of the system, the other side of that explanation: it is there a question not of husband, wife and killer (Vargas, Susan and Quinlan, Quinlan, wife and x) but of the violence of the establishment of the guilt of the woman in order to maintain the husband's position – the explosion of Zita is the opening factor in a series which ends *inevitably* in Quinlan strangling Grandi over Susan's body as the image and repression of desire, the reality of its position in the narrative where Vargas only exists away from Susan's *body* in the attempt to clean her *name* ('How can I leave until her name is clean! *clean!*' IV e).

Consider the number of elements that break the economy of the narrative as the figures of its logic – the Menzies rejection, Tanya's, the Night Man, the homosexual fraternity of the Grandi family, Zita – and the manner in which these touch the narrative instance at the point of its oscillation, namely (since it is the name that falls) Susan. The motel clerk's lengthy and narratively impracticable role ('I'm the night man') is a theatrically hysterical neurosis, a permanent defence against sexuality as represented by Susan's body – in his scene with her (II a), hinging on her desire to go to bed, we always see him as panic across her body (Still 15) and the last shot shows him jittering outside the chalet, framed by an infinite void. Opposite him, Zita, as that sexuality contained, the body-image, represented, positioned, which sexuality, however, can *return*, hence the Night Man's panic. Night Man and Zita indeed

74 are the extremes of the same line which circles between fetishism and hysteria; from the shot of the Night Man jittering at Susan's body, the film cuts to a close-up of a hand plunging a detonator marked 'Linneker Construction Company': from panic at the sudden demand of Susan to the explosion of Zita, the return of the demand and its total destruction, Linneker and Zita, whose very image needs to be rased out. Susan centres the two: the just mean, the lawful place, image and repression, wife, the objectality – the practicability – of desire, its position and its name. Between the two, however, that position is, precisely, precarious, a constant supplication (remember that etymologically 'precarious' is a juridicial term meaning 'obtained by prayers, by supplication'); in the eyes of the Night Man Susan is reflected as the excess of Zita, explosive, sizzling, and it is this reflection which is the initial premiss of the film – the explosion that disjoins Linneker and Zita and Susan and Vargas. From then on, everything turns round the mise-en-scène of Susan's body and the panic images of its sexuality. The line from Night Man to Zita is crossed by the line of the fantastic sexual *brouillage* of the Grandi family – homosexual, lesbian, hermaphrodite (Still 25). That these images are banal, laughable, fantastic is the point: Susan displaced, it is as though the film is operated from the perspective of the Night Man; the narrative out of true, it is as though the film replies with the images of the panic which is the other side of the position of its 'truth', images which simply (and not critically) over-turn it.

The chain of figures this overturning produces can be seized from any moment of the film but it has a kind of accumulative loop in the strangulation scene, which might thus be examined in detail in its figurative repercussions.

It will be recalled that this is the scene in which Susan, having been brought back from the motel to the Grandi hotel in Los Robles, is delivered over by Grandi to Quinlan who then kills Grandi while Susan lies 'drugged' on the bed. For the sake of clarity, the relevant segment (IV a) will be divided up into successive stages.

(1) The segment begins from inside the hotel room with a near shot of the door being slowly pushed open by Grandi. The shot is a continuity reference to the final shot of the assault on Susan in the motel (III 1): as she is picked up off the bed, legs held open, the door of her room is pushed shut and we are left with the darkness that Grandi now opens; there outside, we are here inside.

(2) The next shot reverses the point of view: from the hall corridor, we look over Grandi's shoulder into the room, a perspective which reveals Susan lying undressed on a bed, two women on the far side of her./ The ensuing conversation between Grandi

and the women, members of the family, stresses that no harm has been done to Susan – she has been neither drugged (all that has happened is that she has been quietened with pentothal and reefer smoke has been blown on to her clothing) nor, a fortiori, raped. Evidently, this is a gesture to the Hays code and its avatars – the violence of the motel assault is annulled by a kind of retrospective watering-down. It is also, however, crucially significant (contingence and significance co-operate; the film works within the code and its images): Susan cannot but be intact – the explosion, the broken kiss, the unconsummated honeymoon, the intolerable demand (*imaged* in Still 18, Susan groaning swooningly into the phone – Vargas hangs up; *reversed* in Still 26 – Pancho obliterates her, Still 28). Once again, symbolic and stereotype move together: the presentation – the image – of Susan (of 'desire') is entirely conventional; what is important, precisely the interruption, is the displacement of the narrative of objects (Susan as object of exchange) by that image as the proposition of the bar of desire, of a subject neither in the narrative nor in the image (the problem is one of position) but in the endless circulation of the friction of the two (the narrative and the images it produces of its panic). Desire can only be figured in the very terms of its repression but that figuration is already excessive in the narrative of that repression. The room is dominated by the bed (between the explosion and her restitution at the end, Susan spends the whole of the film in bed – in the motel, in the hotel here, in the police cell); enormous, solidly ornate with its iron tail-piece, massively 'primal-scenish' – leaving, one of the woman runs her hand *for us* (angle, nearness, etc) caressingly over the iron rail in an erotic marking (Still 30).

(3) Grandi, having dismissed the women, goes out into the hall and calls to Quinlan who emerges from a doorway, comes down the hall and enters the room, Grandi shutting the door again after them. As he emerges from the doorway, Quinlan's familiar silhouette is stressed – his bulk, his cane, his chewing. The cane is to be a clue of guilt; left behind by Quinlan at the end of the scene, it establishes him as the killer for Menzies and then for Vargas. Equally, as has been seen, the cane is important in the movement of exchange: he who has the cane has Susan – as Quinlan is now to have Susan. Round the cane, guilt and law, crime and exchange, can then be traced the pattern of the system, the figure of the logic of the narrative, its term, and a host of traits cluster as the dilatory image of that logic, that figure, that term: the cane, the law, the swollen foot, the blind woman, the cane as key to the riddle of the strangulation for which Quinlan discovers himself to be guilty, which he himself commits. The film knows one formal relation (it is the constant principle of the very composition in frame) – the triangle, ceaselessly varied in the perpetual narrative of the problem of desire and position; here: Quinlan, Susan, Grandi.

(4) Inside the room, Quinlan confronts Grandi over the bed, over Susan, with Vargas' gun and makes him phone Menzies at the police station./ Triangle, composition repeat the previous scene in the hotel (I e) when Susan was threatened by Grandi with Pancho absent in the mirror; the position of the gun in Still 31 is exactly the position of the gun in that scene; simply, Grandi now occupies Susan's place./ Quinlan has Grandi turn out the light, leaving only the on/off illumination from the neon sign in the street. Again recalling the earlier hotel scene, this refinds thereby the systematisation of light in the film as weapon and sexual attack (remember Pancho and the torch); the paradigm is clear: illumination – Zita or Susan as stripper or pin-up/obliteration – Susan blacked out, Zita's picture erased with acid./ Like the cane, the gun exchanges narratively and symbolically; Quinlan threatens Grandi (Susan) with Vargas' gun; Vargas has the gun in I k (has Susan), finds it disappeared in III n (finds the scene of Susan's 'rape'); and the Night Man writhes hysterically – 'What would I want with a gun! ' / Before assaulting Grandi, Quinlan must reject Menzies; as Menzies has telephoned Tanya to find Quinlan, so Quinlan telephones Menzies to abandon him. The telephone is a fundamental mode of triangulation in the film: Menzies/Tanya-Man (Quinlan's absence), Stills 22 and 23; Quinlan-Grandi (Menzies' absence)/Menzies, Stills 32 and 33; Vargas/Susan/Blind Woman (the absence of Vargas to Susan), Stills 17, 18 and 19; etc.

(5) Quinlan strangles Grandi and exits leaving the body hanging over the foot of the bed./ The assault on Grandi is violent in the extreme (stress of camera movement, close-up, wide-angle distortion), 'unpleasant' in the sense of the conventions of a sexual violence; it repeats – realises – the murder of Quinlan's wife, the stocking used is Susan's, Grandi's posture is a grotesque invitation (close medium-shot, lights on and off, frenzied music, his hair-piece askew, shirt off the shoulder, he shivers arms outstretched, body open, along a wall of the room), condensing the trouble – the mixture – of the family (the theme of homosexuality strong after the rejection of Menzies)./ Throughout the scene, Susan is lying undressed on the bed, her head at its foot, tossing and grunting; her moaning reaches its climax at the moment of strangulation and intercutting puts her for Grandi and Grandi for her, strangulation and rape, violence and pleasure, defines the *crime*. Stills 34, 35 and 36 are the last three shots of the strangulation. The final shot of the ecstatic Quinlan (Still 36) ends in darkness as the neon sign goes off and there is then a cut in the dark to Susan peaceful on the bed, becoming visible after a few instants (Still 37) – an effect of fade out and in. The passage between the two shots condenses the scene, the chains of elements that cross through the film: *Susan obliterated at the point of desire*, the crime is that position (law and justice are split over the story of an empty shoe-box suddenly filled with dynamite). Caught in the

figures of its own crime, the narrative is constantly emptied; Susan can be restored but precariously, a gap is left (Still 58)./ Grandi's body hangs over the bedrail the woman caresses, the (primal) scene played out.

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(6) Susan wakes to discover Grandi's body, rushes screaming to the window and is seen outside on the fire escape shouting for help./ When Susan opens her eyes, it is to the mirror-image of Grandi, his head over her head, the camera cutting subjectively from one point of view to the other./ Image of the crime (rape, murder, obliteration), Grandi is an inverted image of Vargas; waking on her honeymoon on a hotel bed Susan finds Grandi in her husband's place. From the fire escape, she sees Vargas below in his car and cries 'Mike! Mike! Mike!' – what else is there to do but accept the crime and put the image back in its place, the right way up? the names return to 'Suzy' and 'Mike', the narrative can be played out, more or less resolved by Vargas and his microphone.

To be continued.

SEFT Weekend Schools 1975

Mise en Scène

The second in a series of weekend schools organised by the Society for Education in Film and Television, it will be held from 6-8 June 1975.

The weekend will present the range of examples of *mise en scène* drawn from films by Ophuls, Renoir, N. Ray, Hitchcock, Hawks and Minnelli, and will examine them in the context of different critical analyses.

An examination of the visual style of the Film Noir will also be included. The school will comprise screenings, presentations, and group discussions. Further details and application forms from

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Made in Ealing¹

John Ellis

1. Why Production?

Writing about film production has generally been a ghetto of cinema criticism. As most film criticism has seen its main function as fixing the meaning of a film, then ideas of production have been called in only as another witness to the interpretation. This may be either that *Citizen Kane* is not an anti-capitalist film, ('How can you imagine – if you know that capitalists do not act haphazardly, which is easy to prove – that such a monopoly could be capable of producing a film against capitalism?' – Gerard Leblanc in *Ciné-thique* n 6 p 28), or that Buñuel's limited control over production ruined what have been argued are 'his' finest texts:

'Whether in Mexico or in France, it appears he had little control over the projects he was offered. My own memory of all the films made during this period is of seriously marred films of considerable interest. Whether they are marred by thundering implausibilities (*Susana*, *Archibaldo*), crabbed plots (*El* and nearly all the French stuff) or indifferent acting (especially *The Young One*), they all seem to be films less interesting in themselves . . .' (Peter Harcourt, *Six European Directors*, p 119).

More serious and sustained consideration of film production can be found in two places. The first is fan magazines, whose (often deliberately fictitious) descriptions are intended to support and nourish the process of stardom, both to emphasise the difference between stars-in-real-life and normal people, and to affirm that they too suffer as mortals. This makes the reading of a film with one or more of these stars in it more complicated. The film is one text, the star is another text passing through it. The result is a system in which any film is guaranteed to signify over and above its

1. This article has been developed from an MA thesis dealing with the sixteen comedies and their production for the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.

connotations as a textual system. Fan magazines, therefore, perform more or less the same function of 'increasing enjoyment' as that claimed by much 'deeper' criticism. The other direction of film production studies, however, is that of enlightenment, either in detailed descriptions of film production like Lindsay Anderson's account of the making of *Secret People* at Ealing, or the more recent 'sociology of culture' exemplified by Philip Elliot's *The Making of a Television Series*. The purpose of both these studies is to examine the institutional constraints, technological and aesthetic; but they both take as self-evident the meaning of the text thus produced. In Elliot's book, the survey of the audience is designed only to test the programme makers' conceptions and to contextualise the feedback. Both books are still within a criticism which sees the text as an object with one 'real' meaning to be determined.

Against this, semiology sets an idea of a text as an area of production of meaning, an idea of criticism which is to 'follow the rhythm of the text'. The emphasis is shifted from what the text means to how it means. Reading is seen not as drinking the meaning off the screen, but as real work which involves an audience caught in a certain relationship with the film, using codes they have acquired in order to produce meanings from the text. But once this is said, it is necessary to speak historically (politically): even with the present mode of watching (that of the confirmation of the subject in an imaginary wholeness), not all the possibilities of the text in question can be realised. Films are capable of producing more than one meaning at the time of their release as well as at different moments in history.

The distribution of codes necessary for the interpretation of texts is unequal: some codes are not known by almost all of the working and lower middle classes. They do not possess (and have no need for) that complex of codes which enables an art cinema audience to enjoy a Jansco film without knowing anything of the Hungarian history it deals with. The possession of such codes is the cultural monopoly of certain groups within the bourgeoisie (teachers, culture-industry workers etc), groups which usually do not possess economic or political power (see Pierre Bourdieu: 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction' in Richard Brown, ed, *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change*, Tavistock, London 1973). Ealing's creative elite was itself such a group: its members had a privileged access to knowledge and culture, a cultural capital which threw them onto the intellectual side of the division between mental and manual labour, onto the side of capital rather than that of labour. So although they were objectively members of the petty bourgeoisie (ie neither proletarian nor owners of the physical means of production), the position in which they found themselves was a middle-class one, a contradictory position on the edges of the bourgeoisie itself. This contra-

80 dictory role led them to want to make films 'about the people', but they were so caught within the middle class (so isolated from the proletariat) that, for a number of reasons, they could only conceive of 'the people' as those groups at the lowest level of their own class: the petty-bourgeois stratum of small shopkeepers and clerks. Hence this study deals in part with the internal contradictions of the bourgeoisie, of a group in possession of cultural 'capital' aligning itself with petty-bourgeois interests.

But it is more than that, for Ealing films were not seen and enjoyed only by members of the film-making profession or of the lower middle class. Even where people of different class fractions do possess the same codes, they inhabit them differently. Using the term 'code' tends to obscure this, as it seems to indicate a finite set of signifiers with their signifieds in place and immutably connected with them. But codes are not units of meaning, they are areas of connotation that are occupied differently by different classes and even class fractions, complicated by other factors such as region (eg the Scottish readings of Ealing's Scottish comedies), and sex, as well as the whole cultural experience of the viewers.

However, to determine the real nature of a text such as an Ealing film, it is necessary to examine its production within its historical context. No reading (even a reading which ignores part of the text: a common occurrence) escapes from the determinations placed on it by production. Production makes a text; readings use the text but cannot change it. So to determine the possibilities of any film, the material, technological, aesthetic and ideological determinants in its production have to be examined: only here can it be decided where a film coincides with the dominant ideology, and where it diverges from it. The position from which a film asks its questions is often that of a class fraction that is in a contradictory position within the dominant ideology: this in itself may constitute a progressive aspect (as with the early 'anarchic' Ealing comedies) or a reactionary aspect (like the later *Titfield Thunderbolt*). Both the particular troubling of the dominant ideology which the film reveals only to 'resolve' it, and the particular form of the realist mode which is being used can then generate other meanings, both dominant and subordinate.

This is to see the text as a historical product, which is at once to see its historical role and its potential. Film texts are the product of three determinants; it is only by excavating these determinants that it is possible to show the way in which (the 'extent' to which) it is seized by the dominant ideology, and therefore the progressive potential of its alternative readings.

Any film text is first the product of the entire history of the cinema (its system of production, distribution and exhibition) down to the present, inasmuch as this history is written into the technology available. However, this technology is 'demanded and exploited' in the conjuncture of particular economic and ideological

conditions' (Stephen Heath, *Cambridge Review*, Autumn 1974), its limits and potential are those of the dominant ideology. This technology is therefore directed towards the containing of contradictions within the realist mode; to the current ideas of entertainment; 'to the renewal of the world as it is from within, ie according to the current fashion' (Walter Benjamin).

The second area of determination begins to open out progressive areas within (and sometimes in conflict with) the space of technology. This is the specific organisation of production which creates the text. The character of the process by which ideas are generated; the different emphases given to the stages of pre-production, shooting and post-production; the different control that groups have over these stages and that of exhibition and distribution; all these develop a text whose relation to the dominant ideology is uneasy, strained in some way. For instance, Ealing emphasised the scripting and pre-production stage more than most studios: that is, they paid more attention to the questions and disruptions which the text posed than to the creation of a smooth, technically-perfect surface. Similarly, their agreement with the Rank Organisation contained a clause whereby the studio had the right to refuse the terms of exhibition of any film (a right never exercised – all Ealing's films were released as A features).

The third area of determination is that of the beliefs of the group controlling production. Their aesthetic and social ideas determine the way in which conflict is resolved. This is the area of the relative freedom of the individuals whose work creates and sustains the structure of determinations in which they are caught. Their freedom is (necessarily) constructed from a field of possibilities: the form of comedy is one such field whose strengths and limitations are already established, even if (as in Ealing's case) they are used in a relatively new way. This play of freedom and determinations is as true for the social beliefs of the film-makers, both in that they belong to the middle class, and to a certain fraction of that class (the possessors of 'cultural capital'); and in the ways in which their particular beliefs lead them to adopt, in their film-making, the position of a different class. This is Ealing's situation: a group of conventionally educated intellectuals, through a certain liberal-radicalism, come to make films about, and for, 'the people', whom they think of as the lower levels of the petty bourgeoisie. Thus individuals are a vital part of the process, not as finished entities with world views and metaphysical preoccupations, but as social beings.

This is the process which forms the text, the raw material from which readings are produced. The ways in which this raw material is structured determine the form of the production of meaning. The precise limits of the alternative readings of a text can only be grasped by examining its process of production, understanding by 'process of production' the way in which it relates to the

- 82 dominant ideology, where it silently meshes with it, and where it (consciously and unconsciously) reveals its contradictions with that ideology and its unease in the face of history. Progressive and reactionary tendencies in a film are therefore determined by taking into account not only the differing audiences for which it is intended, but also the process which produced it.

If film production and consumption are thought in this way, it becomes possible to bridge the present division between radicalism in film criticism and radicalism in film production: a situation where SEFT (with honourable exceptions) neglects the politics of film production, and the ACTT report *Nationalising the Film Industry* can argue:

'Transferring the film industry from the private to the public sector will alter more than the industry's economic function. The industry's social function will radically change. New demands will be made of it, and new structures must, among other things, be flexible enough to cope with these new demands whether they come from outside or within. . . . We have avoided making a great number of detailed proposals about operations after nationalisation, and emphasised the organisational aspects of a publicly-owned film industry' (para 129).

It is necessary to think a radical change in the social relations of production at the same time as a radical change in the social relations of consumption. The two enterprises cannot progress separately.

2. Ealing and the Industry

At the end of the War, Britain was producing about forty feature films a year, six of which were Ealing's. The War had seen the inauguration of a new form of realism, a 'documentary approach' of which Ealing provided a good example. Moreover, the distribution of power in the industry had changed: the acquisition by Rank of Gaumont-British and Odeon cinemas meant that they became one of the three major forces in the industry. They owned two of the three large cinema circuits, the biggest single distributors, and 70 per cent of the studio space then available. The second major force, Associated British Picture Company, also owned studios (some requisitioned or being rebuilt), the other large cinema chain and the second largest distributors. The third defining force in the British industry was Hollywood, which consistently provided over half the films seen in the cinemas. Its power therefore lay predominantly in distribution, but it also had some production interests (Warner, MGM) and Warner's had a 25 per cent holding in ABPC. These three forces defined the British cinema, and their hold was consolidated as cinema declined in importance in the 1950's.

After the War, Rank set out on a major programme of production expansion, backed by Lord Rank's extensive capital in flour-milling. The aim was to break into the American and world market, setting up distribution companies and buying chains of prestige cinemas in the US, Canada, South Africa etc. In England they made super-spectaculars like *Caesar and Cleopatra* (cost £1,278,000) for prestige purposes, in order to create a demand for British films in America, and also tried to expand production by cost-cutting methods like Independent Frame, and the Rank-financed but totally autonomous Independent Producers Ltd, through which Powell/Pressburger's *Archers Films*, Lean/Neame/Havelock-Allen's *Cine-guild* etc made the films they wanted. It was in this atmosphere of immense and costly expansion and experimentation (the Cookham cartoon unit was axed after costing some half million pounds), that Balcon concluded an exceptional finance and distribution deal with Rank:

'Negotiations were skilfully conducted by Reg Baker and eventually an agreement was concluded which gave Ealing complete production autonomy and independence, circuit release for Ealing films, favourable distribution terms, and approval of the terms on which our films were booked to cinemas. As far as finance was concerned, the Rank Organisation provided a 50 per cent contribution (subsequently 75 per cent) and other fringe benefits, altogether a unique contract' (*Michael Balcon presents . . . A Lifetime in Films*, p 154).

Thus Ealing became an independent company tied into one of the dominant forces in the industry: they were engaged in a distinctive and innovatory form of film-making which at the same time fulfilled enough of the industry's basic requirements to make them a safe gamble, a prized commodity.

Rank's expansion programme began to run into trouble even before the disastrous 1947 dollar crisis. Production in 1946 lost them £1,667,000: they had emulated Hollywood's production values (including the extravagance) rather than inaugurating a new style of film-making; they lost heavily on prestige roadshow productions, while cheaper films like the Ealing comedies more than covered their costs and more specialised films like *Hamlet* made money on the arthouse circuit; and their attempt to capture a section of the American market came at a point when the American majors were finding that this market alone was no longer able to support their own production. The Hollywood majors still controlled the larger cinema chains, so Rank's task was doubly difficult. Hollywood was uniting to protect itself, most visibly with the formation in 1946 of the powerful Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEA).

The MPEA played a key role in the 1947-8 film industry crisis. Chancellor Dalton imposed a 75 per cent duty on the value of

84 imported films as a result of the dollar crisis. The MPEA retaliated with an immediate embargo on Britain, with the result that Rank and ABPC were forced to launch a vastly expanded production programme or see audiences gradually melt away in the face of endless (mostly American) repeats. Rank, who owned most of the available studio space, saw it 'both as a duty and as an opportunity' to plan a programme of sixty films. Ealing's contribution was to make a film entirely on location, as studio space was fully used. This was *Whisky Galore*, made on the island of Barra. But Dalton's fall meant a victory for the MPEA, perhaps sooner than expected. The new President of the Board of Trade, Harold Wilson, reached agreement with them even before all of Rank's films were under way. Moreover the forty-seven (often inferior) films Rank had produced were suddenly in competition with the best of a year's Hollywood productions. Rather than see audiences disappear into other cinemas, they scrapped many of these, losing anything between £3 million (Rank's official figure on new accounting procedures) and £5 million. This date marks the beginning of the decline of British film production. John Davies spearheaded a general cutback in Rank's cinema activities, and diversification into fields already sketched by the interests they had inherited from Gaumont-British. Ealing, secure and successful, was not directly affected.

Wilson took certain steps to counteract the loss of money and confidence in the industry. He introduced a quota of 45 per cent British films mandatory in all cinemas, but this proved impossible to maintain and was later lowered. More seriously, he set up the National Film Finance Corporation to provide high-risk money. However, most of this was immediately loaned to Korda's British Lion, and was lost in their subsequent bankruptcy. The NFFC used the rest of its capital to assist production with Rank and ABPC, and to set up Group Three as a training ground for new and documentarist directors (Balcon was an unpaid advisor here). Later, the Government introduced Eady money, a levy direct from box-office to the producer, bypassing the distributor. Eady money is awarded on the grounds of financial success (to the films that need it least), and its lax definition of 'British' encouraged a large number of American productions (like *The African Queen*) which were produced in Britain but were American in all but the technicians employed. The Government's actions amounted to underwriting the losses of the two giants, ignoring Balcon's demand for preferential treatment in exhibition for independent producers and the proposals put forward by the ACT (later ACTT) for a state cinema chain to break the power of the monopolies. The need for this was illustrated by the bankruptcy of British Lion (in 1955, losing £1.8 million of NFFC money) and its subsequent problems. It owned no cinemas and was broken by the power of Rank and ABPC: some films were not even accepted for release, while

most were kept waiting so long that their profits were eaten up by interest payments on finance loans.

Ealing was not immediately affected by these movements. Rank continued to provide some finance, and the National Provincial Bank provided the rest, thanks to the presence of Stephen Courtauld on the Ealing board. The bank overdraft was £906,592 in April 1951. However, when Stephen Courtauld resigned from the board in 1952 (due to ill-health), the bank discontinued the arrangement. Instead, Rank increased their contribution to 75 per cent, and the balance was provided by the NFFC; a total of £868,824 between December 1952 and April 1955. This was a far more precarious arrangement. The NFFC was periodically threatened by the Conservatives in power (it was limited in 1957 and 1970), the cinema was declining in importance, largely through competition from TV, and Ealing's success rate was faltering. These factors led to the sale of the studios in 1955, and the transfer of the production unit to MGM's Boreham Wood, where it produced six films in three years.

By that time it was evident that the cinema was beginning to lose its dominant role among the entertainment media in this country. Attendances had dropped from the 1946 peak of 1,635 million to 1,182 million in 1955. The subsequent mass sale/rent of TV sets to the lower middle and working classes (the backbone of cinema audiences) accelerated this decline, attendances dropping to 501 million in 1960 (and 146 million in 1971). This process was no doubt assisted by the policies of the large companies, their wholesale closures of cinemas, and the merger of the two Rank chains in 1959. A production unit like Ealing's could not survive in this context. It needed the stable level of costs and returns that the period 1945-55 provided. The unions (predominantly ACT and NATKE) had made tremendous advances during the War, and their post-war efforts were devoted to maintaining these rather than improving on them: labour costs were therefore fairly stable. Except for the brief period of 10 per cent inflation during the Korean War, costs of materials did not increase rapidly until around 1955. After that date, faced by falling income and rising costs, Ealing had either to change their production values radically or to cease production. They chose the latter.

The cinema industry gave Ealing a certain definition of its task. Regular cinema programmes were about three hours long, with a second and first feature. Vast amounts of capital have been invested in this pattern of entertainment, and to deviate from it is still very difficult, as the fate of short films has shown (see the ACTT's *A Long Look at Short Films*). At that time, second features were considered only as quota quickies to be made for the lowest legal cost (£7,500 for a 60-minute film). An enterprise like Val Lewton's at RKO, exploiting the artistic independence afforded by B-features, was financially impossible in England. Instead, Ealing

86 had to concentrate on first features, with a pre-defined technical standard, costing and length. The length was about eighty to ninety minutes (increasing towards the end of the period in question), and the cost range from £100,000 to anything over £350,000 for big spectacles. Ealing's costs were between £120,000 and £200,000, with the comedies averaging about £160,000, which places them at the upper end of the average price range:

' Films costing under £150,000 were 41 per cent of the total of first features in 1948-9, 58 per cent in 1949-50, and 67 per cent in 1950-1. Between the three years, the percentage of first features costing £100,000 doubled, rising from 21 per cent to 42 per cent ' (PEP Report: *The British Film Industry*, 1951, p 272).

This choice of costing was dictated by the availability of finance, and by the fact that a certain number of films had to be made to ensure continuing profitability. Balcon says:²

' Profits and losses were important of course, but our object at Ealing was to expend certain money on making a programme of films, and to get rather more money back on the selling of that programme so that it turned itself over. We felt that we would come out on top over a programme of films: it's inevitable that certain films make losses.'

Thus though Ealing's aims were not directly commercial, the commercial structure of the industry imposed certain basic definitions on the studio so that a pattern of making about five films a year emerged. But the difference between Balcon's Ealing and the pattern of production under Basil Dean (1931-9) was that all films were regarded as on the same level artistically. Dean had subsidised the prestige productions (mostly adaptations of stage plays) with a programme of immensely popular 'low' comedies starring Gracie Fields and George Formby. But in Balcon's words:

' We did not manufacture films at Ealing, we produced films. The only things we took into account were the things that we ourselves wanted to do. We felt that if we believed in them strongly enough, then we would carry that belief through to an audience.'

Charles Barr has shown clearly (*Screen* v 15 nn 1 & 2, Spring & Summer 1974) that Ealing's aim was to project a certain idea of Britain. The exact historical and aesthetic nature of this aim, both during its progressive moment after the War and in its more uncertain drift in the 1950's, is outlined below. This freedom did not go beyond certain constraints, but these were felt to be natural and normal by the film-makers (this being precisely their power). Massive investments of human energy and capital had normalised a certain number of the potentials of film. These were expressed

2. All quotations from Sir Michael Balcon, unless otherwise stated, are from an interview with the author of this article in August 1974.

in the exhibition in the film theatres of a certain kind of entertainment programme, but also in the very equipment which the film-makers used.

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3. Studio Technology

Technology is not a neutral force in filming: it contains in its very construction basic assumptions about the ideological purpose of film. Therefore the history of film is not a history of technological development carried on in a back room by scientists dedicated to the perfection of the medium. It is a history in which technological development is itself tailored to the needs of the dominant ideology. In the late 1940's and early 1950's, it was becoming possible for films of adequate technical quality to be made completely outside the studio. Ealing's films were not studio-bound, but with the exception of *Whisky Galore*, none were completely location films. The realism needed by Ealing was not that of the *nouvelle vague* or even of Italian neo-realism, it was much closer to the traditional studio-filming of pre-war British and American films. Ealing did not abandon the studio; they even engineered their location work so that it would preserve as many as possible of the features of studio work. There were several reasons for this: much capital was invested in the studio and its equipment (the studio itself was sold for £467,000); much technical skill was invested in studio production methods; the technology for location shooting was developed slowly as a result of these large investments (it accelerated when the contraction of the cinema market and the demands of television dictated cheaper productions); and finally the kind of realistic surface needed could be achieved in the studio as easily as on location.

The normal equipment available at the time illustrates this complicated interplay of technological development, the material demands of capital, ideological constraints and the learnt techniques of film-makers.³

Studio cameras were bulky, blimped and sophisticated. Technological development had been directed towards three aims: to produce a camera that had a constant speed of twenty-four frames a second and silent running (the demands of the realist sound film); a camera that was rock-steady to avoid an unstable image; and a lens which reproduced as nearly as possible the subjective effect of an individual watching a scene, eliminating the 'distorting' parallax effects of 'true' perspective. Cameras were normally mounted on a tripod as tall as an average man, completing the effect of recreating the monocular perspective of a spectator watching a real scene. Tripod mounting was assumed in several cameras:

3. The bulk of the technical information for this section has been taken from R H Bomack: *Cine Data Book*, Fountain Press, London 1950.

88 the Mitchell Standard and the Newall (made by a Rank subsidiary) used a focussing system through a side-mounted telescope, with the camera tipped side-ways on its tripod to put this in the position of the lens. The requirements of sound shooting also imposed heavily on the design of cameras: the Mitchell Standard, the Vinten Everest and Normandy all had motors synchronised only for twenty-four frames a second. Studio cameras that could shoot fast or slow motion were the exception rather than the rule. These cameras were also blimped, muffled so that the sound of the mechanism was not picked up by the recording equipment, with the result that they weighed around 150 pounds. To move them therefore became a major operation: a tracking shot required either a trailer with pneumatic wheels or tracks. British studios, in contrast to most others, had no curved tracks. In short, to get a complicated camera movement 'right' (smooth, even, unobtrusive) required several takes. As this tended to slow down shooting and to increase costs, directors and cameramen tended to avoid such movements. Thus the accumulated determinants written into the cameras produced a tendency towards a cinema where fluid camera movements were replaced with fluent and complex cutting. Hitchcock, in his interview with Truffaut (Panther, p 218), shows more limitations of these cameras: when he made *Rope* (1948) in a single shot, he found that the largest magazines would take 1,000 ft (11 mins 6 secs at sound speed), so magazine changeovers had to be masked by someone obscuring the camera. He also describes the difficulties of orchestrating such long takes, using a large and specialised studio staff accustomed to short takes.

Portable cameras were beginning to change. The standard Bell and Howell Eyemo used by Ealing was designed for exceptional shots: it had a fixed shutter speed, a lens turret comprising three lenses, a 100 ft magazine with the spring-wound motor running for a maximum of 55 ft (35 secs at sound speed), and provision for electric running up to 400 ft (4½ minutes). It weighed about 15 pounds. However, the new Eclair Cameréclair was just becoming available: it weighed 11½ pounds when loaded; with a standard cassette-loading 400 ft magazine, waist battery belt, variable speed and reflex focussing. This was a portable camera on which normal shooting was possible. However, Ealing's realism did not need it, and its full possibilities were not exploited till the 1960's.

The development of camera shutter speed, film negative stock and studio lighting had all been directed towards increasing the range of contrasts available on black-and-white film, and thus the illusion of depth and flawless surface of the image. Film stock and printing were both directed towards high contrast, non-grainy pictures; shutter speeds on studio cameras varied from around 1/50th second to 1/900th second (the Eyemo was fixed at 1/54th second); a studio lighting style had been developed also to give the illusion of depth (physical and thus psychological). The conditions

of studio lighting, with its large range of contrasts, were difficult to reproduce on location. Thus Ealing's overall shooting style tended to compromise between the two: a bland lighting style was adopted in the studio (because the renunciation of certain possible effects connoted 'documentary'); highlighting and spotlighting were used sparingly, creating a rather flat picture which seems almost drab in comparison with the chiaroscuro effects of the Hollywood film noir (*Double Indemnity*) or the deep focus film (*Mrs Miniver*), but approximates closely to that obtained by current TV lighting procedures. In return, location shooting was approximated to the studio: the street in *Passport to Pimlico* was built on a bomb-site as a set. This made possible a certain amount of control of the lighting effects.

Colour presented a new range of possibilities. Hitchcock states:

'I especially admired the approach to lighting used by the Americans in 1920 because it overcame the two-dimensional nature of the image by separating the actor from the background through the use of backlights — they call them liners — to detach him from his setting. Now in colour there is no need for this, unless the actor should happen to be dressed in the same colour as the background, but that's highly improbable. It sounds elementary, doesn't it, but that's the tradition and it's quite hard to break from it' (*ibid*, p 220).

Colour provided the full range of the visible spectrum with all its opportunities for contrast, so backlighting was no longer necessary. This could have provided the solution to one of the problems of Ealing's location shooting where, whilst such subtle lighting was impossible, the facial expressions had to carry all the signification of mood since music was not used to supply this information (another tenet of Ealing realism). And as Balcon says, 'On location you'd sometimes get better results with colour; sometimes you could get good enough results with colour when you'd have been held up using black and white'.

But at this time colour was new, and was used to connote the super-realism of the spectacle. *Where No Vultures Fly*, a film with long stretches in which the camera feasts on the flora and fauna of Africa, is a colour film; so is *The Titfield Thunderbolt*, which emphasises the picturesqueness of the English countryside and the glamour of the trains. Not until *The Ladykillers* (1955 — the last film in the studio) is colour used for a lower-middle-class urban comedy. Here it still retains some of the spectacular elements: the rich dark reds and browns (reminiscent of Hammer horror) show that the London of terraced streets is no longer a real location for events carrying connotations of actuality (cf the whole range of films from *It Always Rains on Sunday* to *The Lavender Hill Mob*). The setting is by then accepted, another stereotype in the common cinematic language enlivened by the connotations it

90 had received from its previous uses as much as from its place in everyday experience. The audience's pleasure in *The Ladykillers* lies in the recognition of many stereotypes (the gangsters, the little old lady, the barrow boy etc) and the interplay between them, rather than, as with the earlier comedies, in the possibility of a closer, more radical self-recognition.

This matter of lighting and colour illustrates the complicated interplay of determinants on the form of a text, and on the practice of film-making. Hitchcock notes that the practice of using liners persisted when its technical *raison d'être* had disappeared: Balcon says that colour could be used more efficiently on location to overcome lighting problems; but aesthetics gave it a different function, so most of the films were made in black and white.

The studios themselves are also a part of this process. As the intention was to produce five films a year, each had an average of ten weeks on the studio floor. Thus space limitations were a real factor in defining the shape of the films: Ealing had three main stages of about 8,000 sq ft each. This was fairly small, as the average size of major studio stages in 1950 was 11,500 sq ft (PEP Report, 1951, p 277). Denham's two massive stages were 35,000 sq ft; Ealing could make a maximum space of 16,000 sq ft by sliding back the doors between stages 3a and 3b, but only rarely, because of tight shooting schedules. In addition to the shooting itself, Ealing had facilities for pre-production, post-production and publicity. Development, printing and optical processes were carried out at Rank's Denham Laboratories, where picture quality was tailored to the demands of the Rank cinema chains. Ealing therefore employed about 400 to 430 people; of these, 110 were technicians (directors, camera staff, sound, cutting etc); 170 were construction staff (art and costume staff, scene painters etc); and 150 were 'clerical and other grades' which presumably includes the script department, accountants, publicity, secretaries and typists. This distribution of staff differs from that in the industry as a whole:

	Ealing %	British average %
Administration	35	24
Construction	40	46
Technical	25	25

(Source: Michael Balcon, British Institute of Management Occasional Paper 1950; and *Board of Trade Journal* 1951.)

This itself reflects the different emphasis given at Ealing to pre- and post-production; more administrative staff were needed to deal with the internal production of scripts and with publicity, and a large production and accounting staff to keep costs and shooting schedules as low as possible. Ealing Studios accounted for some 14 per cent of the technicians employed in the industry in 1949.

4. Organisation of Production

Charles Barr's articles on Ealing Studios in *Screen* v 15 nn 1 & 2 (Spring and Summer 1974) have already dealt with the specific history of Ealing, built as the first sound studio in England by Basil Dean, and originally planned to be double its eventual size: Balcon attributes this shortfall to the unsuccessful stock-market flotation of 1931. Barr also contrasts the different production methods adopted by Dean and Balcon, as well as charting the various influences on Balcon's method of production and the distinctive forms of Ealing's post-war product. The influences he traces are those of Dean himself; of Balcon's previous career; of the 1930's documentary movement; and of the war situation. Equally important is Barr's demonstration of the way in which production under Balcon was stabilised with a large staff of directors, associate producers, editors and cameramen etc under permanent contract; as well as the way in which promotions were made internally. Barr tabulates the Ealing careers of this tight group, and provides detailed information (on which I draw heavily) about the previous and subsequent lives of major figures.

This gives a picture of a creative elite in the studio: at any time there were about eight directors, eight associate producers and half a dozen scriptwriters who formed the nucleus around whom projects grew. Other people with a major influence on the eventual shape of the films were the senior editors (a pool of about six); the cameramen, of whom three or four were on permanent contract (Douglas Slocombe for seventeen years, Otto Heller for the last three years); and the art directors. In all, the creative elite numbered about fifty out of the staff of 400.

Whereas normal union rates were paid to the majority of the staff, this 'top echelon of creative people', as Balcon calls them, accepted substantially lower salaries than was normal:

'During the war and immediately afterwards we were prepared to work not attaching too much importance to what we earned. But during the 1950's I think that the studio was showing slight signs of fragmentation: temptations must have been coming from other people. The agents fastened on to Ealing and our personnel, and they'd get offers from all directions' (Balcon).

T E B Clarke, the scriptwriter of seven of the comedies, describes one such approach. After his Academy Award for *The Lavender Hill Mob*, he was approached by 'a well-known Hollywood actor lately turned producer' who wanted some spare-time uncredited writing work:

'In the absence of a written contract he was ready to pay me cash in advance. At this he snapped open his attache case; it was packed with five-pound notes. . . . I forget how long I hesitated, but I can still recall the look of scornful pity on that familiar face at my

Clarke's loyalty to Ealing is graphically demonstrated by this, but it is a loyalty which he looks back upon with a little regret:

' During my sixteen years at Ealing I dealt personally with all renewals of my original contract. Astonishing as it seems now, it was considered rather caddish for anyone on the creative side to employ an agent, who doubtless would have gained one better terms than one managed to get oneself. Today when I re-read some of the clauses in those contracts which I had cheerfully accepted, I gasp over my humility and the fidelity to Ealing that caused me to disregard all enticements from the outside world ' (p 181).

He claims that the time of *The Lavender Hill Mob* he was paid around £1,500, 'and I have had nothing from it since'. Balcon thinks that Clarke's final contract made about five years later guaranteed him 'a five-figure sum'.

This was probably exceptional, a payment for an Academy Award winner; most of the senior staff seem to have been paid about £5,000 a year, the average salary for an Ealing director. This was accepted as the price for security and artistic freedom: 'We weren't paid much but we had the advantage of being very free' (Mackendrick interviewed in *Positif* n 92, 1968). The profit from the films was mostly creamed off by the Rank Organisation as distributors, exhibitors and co-financers. The five directors of ATP and Ealing Studios Ltd were also paid significantly more than the film directors, but the difference is minimal compared with that between Rank staff and executives. The board consisted of Balcon, Stephen Courtauld, Leslie and Reginald Baker and (from 1950) the production supervisor, Hal Mason. Their fees amounted to a total of £33,770 in 1948 (£6,754 each if shared equally), rising to £38,090 in 1950 (£7,618 each) and £39,482 in 1954 (£7,896 each).

The exact distribution of the costs of a single Ealing film are difficult to determine. The company is reluctant to release detailed figures, but Balcon did give a rough estimate of a typical budget. The total cost of each comedy was about £150,000, with *Whisky Galore* the cheapest at £120,000. Of this, £5,000 went to the director and associate producer (on the assumption that they were involved in two films a year, this being half their salaries); sets and their construction accounted for £15,000 to £20,000; the cast for a similar amount; and the story costs and the film and laboratory costs were around £7,000. This scant information does begin to show how Ealing's production methods compared to those of similarly priced productions. The Gater report on film production costs gives percentage figures for four films whose average price was £152,000 in 1946-8. The range for the producer's and director's fees is 3.4 per cent to 8.2 per cent (Ealing's are amongst the lowest); for the story, from 2 per cent for an original script to

10.4 per cent for an expensive property. Ealing's original scripts seem to have accounted for around 5 per cent of the total. Ealing's cast cost little at 14 per cent (few stars were used): the range being 14.9 per cent to 16.3 per cent; the cost of sets and construction was average at 14 per cent, the range being 11.2 per cent to 19.4 per cent. From this evidence it seems that the distribution of film costs at Ealing was not very different from the general pattern. No figures are available for studio charges, wages and salaries, or finance and insurance charges, which vary considerably for the Gater report productions. However, as I shall now go on to demonstrate the organisation of this production differs considerably from normal studio practice.

5. Preproduction

'The most important work is done before and after a film goes on the floor' (Balcon in a BFI summer school paper, 1945).

'Those sixteen or seventeen people sitting at the huge round table over their cups of tea did not really fit into the usual conception of a "directors conference" at all. . . . The atmosphere was friendly and informal.

'And yet, almost all the producers, directors and scriptwriters of Ealing Studios were gathered around that table in one of the periodically held studio conferences in which views are exchanged in all frankness, and future plans discussed without the air of secrecy so common to many studios, particularly when different production teams are working at the same time.

'Sir Michael Balcon conducted the discussion almost paternally, without any formality; and even the presence of a journalist did not seem to impose any restraint on the free flow of ideas or the raising of delicate questions' (Francis Koval, *Sight and Sound Festival Special* 1951, p 8).

This is a description of the Round Table, the fortnightly meeting of the creative elite at which the studio schedule was decided. Proposals were brought in at a very early stage of development (as one-page treatment), and discussed, rejected or sent for further work. Most of the films originated in the script department or in the ideas of other staff; about 20 to 25 per cent were made from novels (like *Whisky Galore*) or from stage successes (like *The Man in the White Suit* from a play by Roger Macdougal, Mackendrick's cousin). This was an extraordinarily small percentage. Balcon describes one such occasion when the studio bought the screen rights of Amis's *Lucky Jim*:

'Jack Whittingham was very keen on it. He went on to write the script on his own, but I didn't like the treatment at all. I'm probably all wrong but I couldn't bear it; and the general consensus

94 of opinion was that it wouldn't do, so we sold it.'

(The film was later made by the Boulting brothers.) This was fairly rare, as most ideas were generated within the group itself, and development into a script before rejection was therefore usually unnecessary. Occasionally, ideas offered from outside were accepted. *Pool of London* (1951) was one example:

'John Eldridge, a talented maker of documentaries, had brought to Ealing a script for a film about London's river activities. It needed to be fictionalised, for Ealing had given up making documentaries after the war. . . . I was now assigned to collaborate with Eldridge in grafting a story on to his River Thames background' (Clarke, *op cit*, p 164).

Eldridge ended up with a co-scripting credit for this film. What developed from Clarke's collaboration was the idea for *The Lavender Hill Mob*: Clarke thought it up when he began to research the idea of a bullion robbery fiction for *Pool of London*. The account of Balcon's reception of this idea shows the degree of control he had over the studio:

'After a long absence Tibby arrived in my office one day with some sheets of typewriting and a somewhat hangdog look. This, he said, was an idea for a story he had been working on. I let go at him. Why the hell hadn't he been doing what he had been told to do and getting on with the *Pool of London* story? When he had gone I read the sheets he had left behind, and, angry as I was, I fortunately had the good sense to send for him and tell him to get down to scripting this new idea without delay' (*Michael Balcon Presents* . . ., p 160).

Clarke heightens the dialogue in his account:

'He hit the roof. Who the hell was running the studios? What right had I to decide whether they would make a comedy or a drama? Was I suggesting that the company's outlay on the river story was to be written off as a dead loss?' (*op cit*, p 165).

Similarly, Balcon's control over film projects was final:

'There weren't any big disagreements because for good or evil the final decision was mine. After weighing up the pros and cons, I'd make the decisions and take full responsibility for them. I've no doubt that I made many mistakes, but nobody could disagree after that point.'

There is a certain amount of evidence (and a lot more gossip which tends to divert attention on to a supposed 'personality clash') that this veto was exercised rather more on Robert Hamer's later projects. His preoccupations were significantly different from those of the rest of the studio, which is probably

the basis for this gossip. He disagreed with Balcon over the editing of the trial sequence in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (see below), and this dispute became public and heated, whereas in almost all other comparable cases some kind of private compromise was reached. There are also hints that he nursed projects which were not accepted. His answers to a *Sight and Sound* questionnaire about 'The Film You Would Most Like to Make' (1959) are noticeably different from those of other directors: he talks of a 'long-cherished project which at last seems this side of the horizon', and then goes on to talk of a film showing judicial partiality. He concludes this with:

'If any entrepreneur cares to permit me to make that film, I can assure him that I have the proper sources of information available, subject to the guarantee that they shall be properly used.'

It is obvious that the research for this had already been done (the film was never made); it is an idea which directly contradicts the predominant Ealing themes of affectionate support for the forces of law and order as exemplified in *The Blue Lamp* and *The Long Arm*. It contrasts with the timidity of T E B Clarke, who thought that *The Lavender Hill Mob* might have offended the police by mocking them (see below). But Hamer's thinking was exceptional in its antipathy to certain of the studio's fundamental values. No vendetta was carried out against him, but this questioning of basic assumptions made his career at Ealing somewhat uneasy. His attitude to the studio was one of profound ambivalence: he left after *Kind Hearts and Coronets* to make *The Spider and the Fly* for Rank (edited by Ealing's Seth Holt), but then returned for several years. He existed at the extreme edge, but still within, the community of ideas and assumptions which the studio held.

The examples of *Lucky Jim*, *The Pool of London* and Robert Hamer's later career are exceptions to the general practice of script development. Generally, ideas came from within the group and were discussed at the Round Table:

'Gradually at these meetings a programme would be developed. Hal Mason took charge of all the physical aspects of production, and as a story was built up, I would begin to book the various artists. In this way the studio programme became more definite as the scripts themselves developed' (Balcon).

Script development was carried out not just by the script department, but by the interested parties who were to become associate producer or director. For instance, *Hue and Cry*, originally thought up by Cornelius, its eventual producer, was developed by Clarke and taken up by Crichton:

'"Corny" had in mind a picture based on what might be called the freemasonry among boys, all of them participants in that life

96 of semi-fantasy exclusive to boyhood. . . . "I want to aim," he said, "at a sort of situation that only boys are really competent to handle. I'm completely vague about what it could be, except that it should have a snowball effect – one boy getting his three or four pals interested, they in turn roping in other boys at the places where they work, until eventually we have a tremendous chase or round-up with boys from all over London taking part".

Clarke was assigned to develop this:

'My fifteen-page story outline was well received by Cornelius; it also appealed to Charles Crichton, who saw a film emerging from it that he would like to direct. The outline and our joint enthusiasm brought us Balcon's blessing, though it was impressed on us that our comedy was obviously going to be unconventional and thus a risky venture, which meant it *must* – the word was stressed beyond mere italics – be made on a low budget' (Clarke, *op cit* pp 155-6).

This acceptance meant that the film was given a provisional place in the production programme. Already at this stage the project was gathering a team. Directors came to a film in a variety of ways: as Crichton here; as Hamer at the very beginning of *Kind Hearts and Coronets* when Michael Pertwee first broached the idea; as Frensdorff to *A Run For Your Money* by a simple desire to direct comedy. From this detailed outline, a draft script was written. At this point, the final acceptance or rejection took place; if accepted the film was allocated its place in the production programme, and was destined to be made: Balcon could remember no rejections or abandoned projects after this point. This was about six months before the film was due to take the floor, and a team of staff was created around the original collaborators. An art director was appointed (often someone still working on another project); and a cameraman from the pool who did the screentests from which a cast was assembled. At the same time an editor was allocated from the pool, and the composer of the music hired. Finally the production manager and assistant to director joined. By this stage the details of production had emerged, and the first-draft shooting script had been completed. Then as the preceding project took the floor, leaving ten to twelve weeks to go, the detailed costing and calculations of shooting time were begun. These were carried out in discussion with the Production Department, and at the same time the script was examined in detail by Balcon and by Angus Macphail, the Script Department Head, for 'points of characterisation, dialogue, motivation and clarity of development'. Most scripts went through about four drafts before the final shooting script was completed. At this stage the team was fully assembled; it consisted of the people who would follow the film through all its stages, whereas those working under them only saw the stage they were immediately concerned with. This constitutes the basic division of

labour, dividing collaborators from ordinary workers.

Sets and costumes were being prepared at the same time. A distinctive feature of Ealing work was that many directors also designed their camera set-ups at this point. This practice began with *Saraband for Dead Lovers* (1948), and was borrowed from Rank's Independent Frame experiment (which also involved extensive back-projection etc). Dearden wrote in the published script of *Saraband for Dead Lovers*, p 66:

' During this film we developed experimentally a new system designed to harness inspiration to efficient production methods. We decided to develop the lead developed in other industries – prefabrication. With models and plans we rehearsed the film's action in drawings. Each individual shot in the script was illustrated during conferences many weeks before shooting began, over a thousand action drawings – or set-up sketches as we came to call them – were made '.

As well as collaborating on the script, Alexander Mackendrick was in charge of designing the set-ups for this film, with pen-and-ink sketches. He was still using this method when he made *The Man in the White Suit* in 1951 (see 'The Day in the Life of a Film', *Sight and Sound* April 1951). This may have been because Mackendrick was a rather slower worker than average; certainly Hamer never used such a method, going on to the floor without even a copy of the shooting script in his later years.

A number of other questions were linked with the designing: whether to use colour, whether to take shots on location etc. The decision about colour seems to have been fairly arbitrary. Balcon says:

' I think it arose like any other decision, I can't even remember which films were made in colour. . . . I think *The Ladykillers* was; colour was becoming a thing by that time. But I think it just developed in the way we came to any other decision.'

He also claims that it did not materially affect the costs of a film. It was only taken for a minority of the films anyway, as colour was still exceptional, and not considered suitable for war films for example. The decision about location shooting was more complicated, however. *Whisky Galore*, made almost entirely on location, was an exception: it was cheaper to make it on a Scottish island. Generally, however, it was more expensive to go on location when two-thirds of the film had to be shot in the studio, which the technology tended to favour. Location work was best done in a place which could be isolated and treated as a studio: the bomb-site in *Hue and Cry*, the railway in *The Titfield Thunderbolt*, the specially-built street in *Passport to Pimlico*. On *Secret People* several such decisions had to be made. For instance, an arrival in London created these problems:

98 ' William [Kellner, the Art Director] is worried about the idea of an arrival at Victoria. " This is one of the things we'll have to think very carefully about – to get real facilities if you want to shoot at night. To avoid all that trouble we shifted an arrival at Victoria to an arrival at Northolt [airport] on *The Lavender Hill Mob* – very much simpler; and, as a production point it'll cost you a tenth of the price ". But the social level of the characters makes it too improbable that they should have flown. Thorold [Dickinson] has another idea. " What about Gordon Dines [camera]? Hasn't he got a steady Eyemo arm? Why couldn't you get them off an ordinary train? " William is sceptical. " I don't think it would work. You'll have to go to a lot of trouble and expense if you shoot it at Victoria – lamps, generators, arcs, crowd. People will be crowding round you " ' (Lindsay Anderson: *The Making of a Film*, 1951, p 28).

Similarly, Paris locations were eliminated because French unions demanded an equal number of French and English technicians. So some location shots were re-scheduled for the studio, and sets and background models were made. The considerations involved in locations are therefore those of aesthetics (the realism of daylight shooting and natural settings); those of finance, particularly as location equipment tended to be bulky; and those of control, whether it was possible to direct and manage the pro-filmic events as easily and effectively as in the studio.

6. Production

' The problem of scheduling is briefly this. There is not enough floor space in the studio to allow one to build all the sets for a film simultaneously, and shoot the story from beginning to end, moving from one set to another as the script demands. So a shooting-order must be devised, by which filming can proceed continuously one stage after another, while the Construction Department is given sufficient time between sessions on any one stage to dismantle used sets and put up new ones ' (Lindsay Anderson, *op cit*, p 40).

The use of the studios in late 1950-1 is shown below:

1950	MAIN STAGES	STAGE ONE
Oct	Shooting <i>Pool of London</i> (one stage)	
	<i>Lavender Hill Mob</i> set building; shooting begins mid-month	Tests for <i>The Man in the White Suit</i>

Nov	Extra shooting <i>Pool of London</i> (one stage) Main shooting <i>The Lavender Hill Mob</i>	Tests for <i>The Man in the White Suit</i> and <i>Secret People</i>	99
Dec	<i>Lavender Hill Mob</i> ended for Christmas Set building for <i>The Man in the White Suit</i>	Tests for <i>Secret People</i>	
1951			
Jan	<i>Man in the White Suit</i> shooting		
Feb			
Mar	Final shooting <i>The Man in the White Suit</i> Set building for <i>Secret People</i>		
Mar 15	<i>Secret People</i> shooting begins		
April	<i>Secret People</i> main shooting Extra work on <i>The Lavender Hill Mob</i> and <i>The Man in the White Suit</i> after location shooting		
May 31	<i>Secret People</i> ends		

Pool of London needed extra shooting, so it occupied a stage whilst *The Lavender Hill Mob* was being shot. The result was certain restrictions on space, so *The Lavender Hill Mob* took ten weeks rather than the eight probably planned. At the same time, screentests were taking place on the small Stage One for the next two productions. *The Man in the White Suit* took ten weeks in the studio, and Dickinson's *Secret People* eleven. Balcon refers to both Mackendrick and Dickinson as being somewhat slower than average. Scenes were not shot in sequence, but according to the dictates of studio space. As sets were not up for all of the shooting, care had to be taken to get satisfactory shots, and a certain amount of covering material for emergencies. This also increased the shooting time, since only the roughest rehearsals could be made before the sets were available. So two functions had to be fulfilled before shooting: shots had to be lined up, and the scene correctly lit (a certain amount of pre-lighting was done). Stand-ins were used for the main actors here; then the actors themselves rehearsed on the set. Finally, several takes were made. This meant that an average of two minutes' screen time a day could be shot. This process is described in an article on the making of *The Man in the White Suit* (shooting started around 9.00 am and continued to 7.30 pm):

* The first scene is shot in the laboratory set. It contains no more than half a dozen lines of dialogue – preparing his experiment, the young man is momentarily interrupted by someone inquiring for someone else's office. There are three rehearsals, two takes, in

100 about half an hour. After that, rehearsals for a more complicated shot. . . . The progression of the sequence is – frontal shot of the entry of Guinness and Parker, followed by Waters: cut to reaction shot of the assistant: cut back to Guinness and Parker, followed by Waters, camera panning with them as they walk. Shots 1 and 3 are actually filmed in one, the reaction shot being cut in later. Discussion on correlating the movements of the three actors and the camera goes on for some time. Chalk marks are drawn on the floor. The original plan is temporarily abandoned, another camera position considered, then after two minutes also abandoned. . . . The shot is completely rehearsed before lunch. After lunch, the shot of Guinness and Parker lined up, the actors make the first take. "That's good," the director comments: "now let's make the next one better." Two more follow, and the actors pose for stills: a break follows, while Douglas Slocombe supervises the lining up of a new camera position at the other end of the set. The actors are rehearsed, there are three takes, and that is all' (*Sight and Sound*, April 1951).

This method of shooting dictates the style of the films. At this point the accumulated technological and human determinants are finally expressed in the film. The difficulty and length of time needed to make panning shots are evident. The nature of the studio, its equipment and its schedules therefore dictated a style of filming that tended towards short takes and preferred static to moving camera shots.

Within this framework, the various directors had their own methods of working. At the extremes are Hamer and Mackendrick. Mackendrick always used set-up sketches to compensate for the thoroughness with which he rehearsed the actors. Hamer, however, did not divide set-up design from rehearsal in his later work:

'Of the editor, Hamer has no fears, thanks not only to his own experience in the cutting room, but also to his "reactionary" refusal to go on the floor with a shooting script. His scripts contain neither cutting nor camera instructions. He goes on the floor and begins by rehearsing the scene in full. In the course of rehearsal, as the actors "walk through" their parts, he believes the cuts and the camera angles proper to the scene become clear; while at the same time the method has the huge advantage of familiarity with the action when it comes to shooting out of continuity' (F B Lochart: 'The Making of *His Excellency*,' *Sight and Sound* 1952).

This may be; but it makes the job of a lighting cameraman very difficult, as no pre-lighting etc is possible. It is also part of the screen actor's profession to know a part in such a way that it can be shot out of continuity. Thus, even Hamer's mature shooting style did not fit into Ealing's production methods.

With a shooting style determined to this degree, it was possible

for directors to take over each other's projects: Balcon mentions the help that Crichton gave Mackendrick in the editing of certain parts of *Whisky Galore*; the editor Truman taking over *Passport to Pimlico* when Cornelius was ill for a time; and Hamer taking over *The Cruel Sea* when Charles Frend had appendicitis. But the directors did not 'control' projects: the actors (notably Alec Guinness) had a certain liberty in moulding their roles, although their general character was already dictated by which actor was chosen; the camera crew participated in the composition of the shots and the lighting. A good performance drew applause from the technicians. Asked about the degree of participation by the floor staff, Balcon replied:

' This is a very interesting question. I wouldn't pretend that I had any contact with the scene-painters; that depended on the individual units, and I can't pretend that too much of that happened. I think the director would discuss his scripts with his cameraman, his writer, the editor, his set-designer and people like that. . . . Though there were some exceptions, by and large a director wouldn't go all the way along the line discussing anything.'

The viewing of the rushes provided the main opportunity for such intervention:

' There was an arrangement with the union, by which the whole unit used to give up part of their lunchtime to see the film. It depended on the director, but if they had any sense they invited the whole of the working unit to see the rushes. It was voluntary, but a good unit always did go to see their work.'

Asked if there was any free comment in these sessions, Balcon replied: ' I dare say, amongst themselves. It didn't come my way.' It seems that the actual participation was not great.

There were two viewings of the rushes (takes the director had decided to have printed): Balcon, the film's editor and Hal Mason the production supervisor used to see the previous day's rushes first thing in the morning. Comments were then passed on, if necessary, to the director. The presence of the editor is significant: it shows the degree of autonomy and direct contact with Balcon rather than with the director that the editor had in assembling the film before cutting. The director participated after this stage, in assembly of the rough cut. When a unit was on location, it depended entirely on reports from the studio unless there were local laboratory and/or viewing facilities.

As much sound as possible was recorded simultaneously; it was recorded straight on to an optical track usually from a boom microphone. The sound operator had sole control of this process. But this was only the dialogue; sound effects were usually dubbed in later. In more difficult or complicated conditions, only a 'wild' track was taken of the actors at the time of shooting or going

102 through their lines immediately afterwards. This was used as a guide in post-synching unless it was accurate enough for direct dubbing.

7. Postproduction

This stage consists of editing and dubbing, the preparation of the publicity and the treatment by the distributors. Editing took place in parallel with the shooting. Having seen the rushes, the editor matched sound to vision, and began to build up a first assembly of the film. At this stage, he was independent of the director, but in daily contact with Balcon. After shooting had finished, the complete rough cut was viewed by the director and the editing then took place in collaboration. The music (already composed) could not be recorded until the final cut had been made, and was timed exactly. It was played at Ealing's recording studios by the New Philharmonic conducted by the flamboyant resident supervisor of music, Ernest Irving, a strict traditionalist. The role given to music was usually secondary and supportative: in the comedies it was rarely used to convey emotions. Balcon explains the limits of Ealing's music commitments very clearly:

'The one distinguished composer we did not have success with was Benjamin Britten, although I discussed with him the possibility of his writing the score for a film about brass bands (in which he is, surprisingly, very interested). But Britten takes the view that music cannot be superimposed, and if it has a place in films it must be integrated with the film script from the very outset, which would mean a composer working with the producer, director and writer from the start. I respect his view, and it is difficult to quarrel with the concept; I would have liked to put it to the test, but the problem was to find a sufficient period of time in which we had no other commitments, and this proved impossible. I hope some other producer will try out this idea with him, for the results might well be remarkable' (*Michael Balcon Presents . . .*, pp 147-8).

This is another example of a film which it was impossible to make because of the nature of the organisation of the studio, despite Balcon's obvious liking for the idea.

This is the post-production schedule for *Secret People* as given by Lindsay Anderson (*op cit*, p 159):

Shooting finishes	31 May
First rough cut for Balcon's viewing	5 July
Viewing by Composer and Sound Cutting Dept	15 July
Final cut for Balcon's viewing	27 July
Post-synchronisation	by 20 July
Music session	by 21 September
Dubbing	25 September-9 October

First synchronised print
Negatives and fine-grain print delivered
to distributors
Censor's showing (double head)

16 October

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30 October
5 August.

The post-production stage took about five months. Cutting from the editor's first assembly took about four weeks. This rough cut was then shown and discussed with Balcon, and the final cut took about three more weeks. The censor was shown a print early, without the music track.

The participation of the director and producer at this stage was very much determined by their knowledge of editing. Hamer had come up from the cutting rooms, and his cutting of *Kind Hearts and Coronets* led him to dispute Balcon's judgment, usually the final authority in this as in all other stages:

' We'd seen his script and we thought it quite brilliant. The only disagreement came in the editing of the film, with a violent disagreement between Hamer and me over the length of the trial sequence. He would not give way an inch or allow a foot of his film to be cut. He wrote passionate letters to all his colleagues inviting them to special showings to gain their support.'

Eventually a compromise cut was agreed on. From the slender evidence provided by pre-production and release-print scripts in the BFI Library, the argument seems to have hinged around a very different interpretation of the entire film. In the trial, Hamer apparently wanted to emphasise the sexual nature of Louis's prevarication between the cold aristocratic woman and the smouldering doctor's daughter. Balcon wanted to emphasise the social nature of the conflict, with Louis's prevarication being between two classes (' the people ' or ' the ruling class ') with the women exemplifying this choice for him. The final cut keeps elements of both. This difference and Hamer's attempt to involve the whole senior staff show how his attitude differed from the studio's general approach. Usually sexual matters remained at the periphery of Ealing films; Hamer's battle was to make them more central to the film.

Once the completed negative had been sent to Rank's General Film Distributors, the film was virtually out of Ealing's control. But their agreement with Rank ensured an easy passage for the films: Rank could not re-edit them, and had to release them as first features. Ealing films were assured national distribution. The studio retained control of publicity, however. Here there was a conscious attempt to create a public image for the studio. Several graphic artists were employed to make a distinct style of poster, and at one time or another men like John Piper, James Fitton, Edwin Bawden and John Minton designed poster campaigns which contrasted strongly with the usual Rank Organisation artwork.

Rank released the films about eighteen months after they had been originally entered into the schedule: the release dates for the films mentioned above were: *Pool of London*, February 1951; *The Lavender Hill Mob*, June 1951; *The Man in the White Suit*, August 1951; *Secret People*, February 1952. Thus the release dates were up to six months after the films had been completed, and a year after shooting had been concluded. Hence it was possible for an Ealing film to be released into a political and social climate fairly close to that in which it had been conceived.

The preceding sections have examined in detail the institutional frameworks in which the film-makers worked. Already certain limits and a definite style of film-making are emerging from these determinants, which are at once determinants of technology and of technique. The whole framework is used by people in certain relationships who hold certain conscious and unconscious beliefs about the nature of their specific task and of the society of which that is a part. The rest of this article will examine these relationships and beliefs.

8. Relations of Production

Ealing had four distinct kinds of employees, and they formed four different social groups both inside and outside the studio. The first were the permanent salaried workers: the directors, script-writers, senior editors, cinematographers etc. They were on long-term contracts, a rare thing in the industry even then, and exchanged job security for lowish salaries. Under them were the permanent wage-workers, the studio technicians, film cutters, secretaries etc. There were also two groups of temporarily employed workers: those paid salaries like composers, outside scriptwriters, leading actors, and those paid wages, like the minor roles and extras, technical advisors etc.

Within the studio, a fairly close working relationship evolved. Everyone was addressed by Christian name or nickname:

'The practice is common, of course, throughout the cinema – even more so in the theatre; and it is a good one in so far as it expresses, or helps to create, a genuine camaraderie of endeavour. It can be overdone: the prop man on the floor of *Quartet* who invited the author to "have a cup of tea, Somerset" was certainly going too far. But at Ealing the habit comes naturally. In the words of a critic, "its films, one feels, are made by a family for the family"' (Anderson, *op cit*, p 159).

This kind of image is common in descriptions of the studio: Publicity Department Head Monja Danischewsky called his memoirs

Mr Balcon's Academy, and in interview Balcon slipped naturally into the image of a team: 105

'We were a very free and liberal group, and I think that had there been a democratic election as to who should lead the side, it's probably immodest of me to say that they would have chosen me to see them through.'

'The Studio with the Team Spirit' had been painted on the wall in Dean's time.

Though this kind of atmosphere was often remarked on by commentators, Ealing's team still preserved the normal relations of production of any studio: a top echelon of creative artists and a large number of employees whose effect over the shape of projects was very limited. In other words, the studio was liberal rather than radical, progressive rather than revolutionary. This made for good union/management relations. Balcon's Gainsborough had been affiliated to Gaumont-British (he was later in charge of G-B production), and they were the first company to recognise the Association of Cine-Technicians (ACT, now ACTT) soon after it was formed in 1933. The rest of the industry waited until 1939. The other unions involved in film-making were NATKE (clerical and construction staff), ETU (electricians), Actor's Equity and the Film Artistes' Association (actors and extras) and the Musicians' Union. ACT's peculiar strength lay in the fact that they were (and are) the only specifically cinematic union, and a white-collar union for technicians. Asked about ACT membership, Balcon replied:

'Everybody was a member I think. The only man they'd let off (I'm an honorary member) was Hal Mason when he became a member of the management, but by and large we were ACT directors' group. As Hal Mason was such a wonderful person with man-management relations, we never had a day's internal trouble other than national disputes which the union brought about. We were all on first name terms, that was the beauty of the studio; I knew every single working man there.'

Sid Cole, editor and then associate producer (*The Magnet*, *The Man in the White Suit*) was a left-wing militant in ACT.

In the industry generally, the labour/management situation was not so pacific. In 1948-9 there were eighty-two union/management conciliation meetings (some dealing with more than one dispute), and in 1953-4 there were only twenty. In a lecture to the University of London Extra-Mural Department in 1955, Sir Henry French, for the British Film Producers, reckoned this to be a sign that:

'Both sides have learnt the advantage of settling disputes on the spot and getting on with making films with the minimum of delay.'

In effect, the producers were asking the workers to carry the can for the 1948 disaster. As I noted above, union action was there-

106 fore devoted to protecting the hard-won advances of the war, rather than towards winning more.

The situation of Ealing's labour force thus reflected the studio's position in the industry: relatively unaffected by the losses of the giants, Balcon and Mason could maintain good labour relations, so that no actual stoppages occurred. But Anderson shows that Balcon's view is a little rosy: there was never a complete identity of interests:

'Most of the unit are late for rushes today as a result of a union meeting in the lunch hour to discuss the application for membership by a junior scriptwriter who has been working in the studio for three years. The application, which had support from above, is rejected; "They were trying to swing something on us" seems to be the general feeling in the little knots of discussion which collect on the floor before shooting starts in the afternoon' (*op cit*, p 116).

Union membership would have enabled this scriptwriter to become a technician: the refusal was based on the argument that at that time there was 50 per cent unemployment in the industry. The division between 'them' and 'us' is clearly marked, and 'them' includes the whole group of senior technicians. It is also noted that 'most of the unit' went to the meeting. Also symptomatic of the real situation is the way in which Balcon's 'we' constantly shifts from the whole 400 employees to the senior group of fifty.

This differentiation is reflected in the way the different groups related outside the studio. Here also there was little interchange. The creative elite used to go to the pub across the green, the Red Lion, to discuss the state of play in the studio. Balcon rarely went: 'I largely used to leave them to themselves in the evening; so they could tear me to pieces if they wanted to, and get it off their chests and come back the next morning.' Meanwhile the average studio-floor worker used to 'toddle off back to his semi' in the words of a BBC news cameraman who now uses the studio. He claims that many of the staff still work there. Stranger, perhaps is the lack of contact between actors and senior technicians. Balcon quotes Michael Redgrave:

'He may deny this, but I don't think that Balcon likes actors; I base this comment on observing that there are no actors among his close out-of-studio friendships, and that - being a good producer - he believes in the film *per se* and does not (whatever his commercial leanings) really believe in the star system.'

Balcon concludes: 'I swear I don't dislike actors, even if some of my best friends aren't' (*Michael Balcon Presents . . .*, p 225).

Promotions, too, took place from a certain stratum of the studio, as Charles Barr's analysis of the nucleus of directors clearly shows. And since this group in practice had the greatest influence

on the creation of the films, the next sections will deal with their beliefs. 107

9. Realism

' *Hue and Cry* had a quality of reality, in addition to its fun, that the public were now prepared, even eager, to accept ' (*Michael Balcon Presents . . .*, p 159).

Ealing Studio's post-war productions were innovatory within realist cinema. The films were recognised as fresh and new, and yet at the same time were easily watched and enjoyed by the mass audience. This is because their innovations preserved many of the fundamental methods of classic cinema (preserved them as part of the unconscious practice of the film-makers): they shifted the terrain of, but did not alter, the basic aim of realism, that of showing the world as it 'naturally' appears to be. Within the cinema, this means a use of language which seems to be invisible, natural but in fact has its own history, and is also massively sustained as natural by its perpetual repetition through the dominant modes of both news and entertainment. As Burch and Dona put it (*Afterimage* n 5, 1974, p 57):

' From the earliest days of the cinema, the whole thrust of ideological discourse was directed towards camouflaging the discontinuities (cutting and framing) inherent in the motion picture image, a thrust which achieved its initial and decisive successes between 1904 and 1914 with the constitution of the laws of spatio-temporal orientation, directly generated by the need to transpose into this new " scene " the representational conceptions of classic Western theatre and the novel of the nineteenth century. One of the main elements sustaining linear discourse was to be, of course, the invisibility of the shot-change . . . '

This language is not the expression of a society and its inhabitants in the process of their social construction; rather, it shows characters who are full and finished, living as the centre of the social totality. This carries with it a certain mode of watching, which confirms the viewer's own idea of her/himself as a coherent entity; that is, as the subject for the ideological formations which make up the text. This process is a complex and double-sided one of recognition and misrecognition. It is recognition in that the viewer's idea of self does actually correspond with the representation, and thus in this sense the representation contains an element of 'truth'. It is misrecognition in that this practice of recognition instantly puts the subject into an already-defined situation; he is inserted into a given structure, a structure which, in Jacques-Alain Miller's words, 'puts in place an experience for the subject that it includes'. Thus the representation of the consistent and finished

108 character confirms the viewer in his position as subject for ideological formations. And this is the effective role of ideology: it exists to produce this category of subject in order to reproduce the relations of production.

But this is not a monolithic process: it may be that this mode of inscription is an impossible one for a revolutionary art, but it is itself fissured and full of contradictions. In any film, the complicated process of recognition-misrecognition takes place in a context where a narrative form is being used to pose certain real (ideologically defined) problems and to reach some resolution or reintegration of their conflict. It is possible for real social problems to be posed in this mode, and this was Ealing's purpose: to make the real world seem worth living in. The very way in which this purpose is posed shows that it is open at once to a reactionary tendency (that of social control), and a progressive tendency (that of showing as full individuals those people who had previously been denied any real individuality: the lower middle and working classes). In 1943, Balcon stated this purpose very clearly. He gave a paper entitled 'Realism and Tinsel' to the Workers' Film Association in Brighton and described Ealing's new project, an alliance of documentary and entertainment film-making. He concluded by quoting the *Documentary News Letter*:

"The way in which we make the real world seem exciting does not matter. . . . But whatever method is used it must be to the point that men and women welcome the idea of living in a real world. It is only knowing it truly and honestly that they can work and play in it happily. With the knowledge of that real world they can have such a full life that all of man's heaven from Mt Olympus to Hollywood, California will seem less than the dreary emptiness of a ballroom in the morning sunlight. People will see that the world itself is rich enough and noble enough to provide for all their needs." That sums up what I feel about films today so much better than I can phrase it myself.

In 1974, Balcon is far more guarded about such statements, but when pressed about what he felt was the purpose of his film-making, he said that 'a lot of people say that they were a force for good in the world'. Historical forces had made a public 'prepared, even eager' to accept this project (and their varied readings of it), and the film-makers existed who wanted to undertake it. But such was the history of this class of intellectuals, that their particular way of undertaking this project was distinct from the American (Welles/Wyler/Toland) or Italian Neo-Realist method. Ealing's project retained the invisible language of the classic cinema (of Hollywood narration) with certain reservations, but was innovatory both in the use of locations, of realistic settings and lighting; in the way in which it attempted to show social groups; and by the decision to show the lower middle class. The particular historical

reasons why the project took this form are investigated below, but first it is necessary to see how it functions within the realist text. 109

The use of specifically filmic language (the mechanism of the narration) can be shown by applying Christian Metz's '*grande syntagmatique*' which divides a film up, not according to each shot-change, but by the groupings of shots into recognisable units: autonomous segments. An analysis of *Passport to Pimlico* showed that it has eighty-five autonomous segments, the bulk of which (numerically and in terms of running time) consist of the three types of linear narrative syntagms (definitions quoted from Stephen Heath: 'Film/Cinetext/Text,' *Screen* v 14 n 1/2, Spring-Summer 1973):

1. Eighteen scenes – 'a series of images offered as spatio-temporally continuous' – which could have been taken in one shot, but are complicated by the use of close-up etc. Most of these are fairly short.

2. Twenty-eight ordinary sequences – 'the common form of sequence in which the discontinuity is simply the omission of moments judged unimportant'; 'real time' is subtly condensed whilst still appearing natural; the location is always the same, the action takes place in one recognisable area. These form the longest parts of the film.

3. In addition, there are ten shot-sequences, entire scenes taken in one shot. These are usually quite short.

4. The last type of linear narrative syntagm is slightly different. It is the episodic sequence, of which there are only four in this film. It has neither the unity of time nor that of place shared by the others; it is a collection of events that take place in the order shown, but with gaps of space and/or time between. These are marked off from the less condensed sequences, as are

5. the seven bracketing syntagms – 'a series of brief shots representing events and situations offered by the film as typical samples of a particular area of reality without any specification as to their temporal interrelation' – a list of examples like those presented when the water supply is restored to Pimlico: watering the flowers, filling an aquarium, washing hair, taking a drink.

Both these types of sequence, the episodic and the bracketing, are isolated from the rest of the film by cross-fades instead of cuts, and by the use of music to accompany them. They appear fairly regularly, punctuating the film, providing bursts of music and collapsed narration. In addition to these types of syntagms, there are certain others with specialised functions:

6. Fourteen explicative inserts, mostly shots of newspaper headlines near the end of the film, where the narrative is particularly condensed; two displaced diegetic inserts, explaining something

110 about to irrupt into the main scene; a non-diegetic insert, an ironic dedication to the death of clothes rationing; and two alternating syntagms, a phonecall showing each of the speakers, and a more complicated case of a mock-newsreel (complicated in construction) alternated with and interrupted by shots and cries from the children watching. (There seems to be no adequate category in Metz's typology for a sequence such as this, where a form of cinematic language is shown as such, placed in quotation marks and mocked.)

Two-thirds of the segments in the film, and considerably more than a half of the running time, are segments which keep a unity of time and place: scenes, ordinary sequences and shot-sequences. These approximate as nearly as possible to real time, and they do not have music dubbed onto them, whereas the segments which advance the narrative between these stretches of real time are covered by music. Music is used to bind together disparate sequences, and to mark off these punctuating sections. The score therefore consists of six short themes, the longest being that associated with Pimlico, usually connoting its success, and the others being two fanfares, a playful tune, a theme for continuous action and a cumulative theme. There are no motifs associated with individuals. The classic 1930's use of music to amplify and define psychological states is entirely absent. So the love scene between Shirley and the Duke can mock the conventions of the stereotyped romantic situation; the swelling strings are replaced by squabbling cats. Emotion is provided by the context, actions and expressions of the actors, not by musical connotations.

The third distinction between this style and other dominant styles can be deduced from those kinds of segments that are not used at all. There are no trick effects; no subjective inserts (the dreams or premonitions of one character); no parallel or descriptive syntagms which present typicalities outside a temporal sequence. The realism of the film therefore consists in denying any subjective information which cannot be deduced from the 'outside' of a person, and in making every image concrete and directly related to a specific situation. This sense of the concrete is carried further: the linear progress of the images is heightened, the discontinuities of time and place are bracketed and flattened by the use of music into brief 'notes' which merely carry narrative information.

This method of filmic narration is very similar to the classic Hollywood use: a highly developed shooting and editing style which nevertheless appears natural. This was already inscribed into the very technology that Ealing used, and the techniques which were applied to its use. But it would have been possible, using even this equipment, to have made greater stylistic innovations. However, this did not suit the purpose of the people working at the studio, and their use of specifically cinematic language only refused certain

techniques in order to make the whole fiction seem super-real and concerned with one concrete situation. 111

Their innovations were principally on another level, not that of the specifically cinematic language used, but that of the languages brought in from outside. To apply Stephen Heath's useful definition, 'in film, what is important to analyse is the particular heterogeneity of languages it subsumes – its combination of codes – and the particular forms by which it achieves this subsumption – its coherence' (*Screen* v 15 n 2, Summer 1974, p 128). The 'freshness' of Ealing's realism lies in the way in which lower-middle-class and even working-class styles and experiences were introduced into the filmic discourse, not for parody, or as objects of concern for the main characters (the form of Saville's *South Riding*, seen as progressive in 1938), but as people who can act and whose actions are a fit subject for fiction. *Screen* has called Hamer's *It Always Rains on Sunday* 'one of the few worthwhile films about working-class London' (v 13 n 2, Summer 1972, p 51), and it was Balcon's project to show 'real people'. There were also attempts to portray a social totality within the narrative form, either in the omnibus films like *Train of Events*,⁴ or in the numerous films about cohesive social groups: *Passport to Pimlico*, *Whisky Galore*, *The Titfield Thunderbolt*, etc. This portrayal of the 'lower orders' was paralleled by a new way of signifying 'this is real' in each shot: no longer is the background there merely as an ever-present connotation of 'carefree luxury' as it is in *The Philadelphia Story* and many other Hollywood social comedies; nor is it that of 'romantic history' as in *Les Enfants du Paradis*. The background had to carry part of the signification 'this is real life'. Two quotations open out into a definition of how this process worked and how it was experienced. The first is from the *Evening Standard* review of *Passport to Pimlico*: 'The studio sets never carry the fresh conviction of the camerawork actually done in the East End' (April 28, 1949), and the second from Balcon a few months before:

'The thought struck me when reading a critic's appreciation of a new film in which he praised: "the newsreel effect" of the camera work. Where are we going, then, with this overinsistence on realism? If we are going to rely on camerawork faking the effect of actuality filming in order to create an on-the-spot illusion of realism, if the employment of amateur actors is done not for reasons of necessity or *faute de mieux* but, again, for an artificial effect of realism ("Look, dear, you can see he's a real soldier because he obviously can't act for toffee!") then what is to happen

4. An interesting case: the story about train-drivers (perhaps Sid Cole's section) is conspicuously more powerful than the standard melodramas about a flirtatious conductor, a murderous actor and a paranoid refugee. It is probably these three plots that prompted Balcon's embarrassed comment 'that the film should never have been made'.

112 to the film as an art form? Surely, we shall be back again to the original revolt of the artist in films against the mechanical literal eye' (*Saraband for Dead Lovers*, p 11).

The illusion of reality in this particular kind of realist film is guaranteed by photographing real objects, rather than a studio art director's remoulding of objects. It provides a different kind of 'language'; no longer is the controlled, stylised poverty of the image supplied by the great art directors of 1930's Hollywood quite enough to guarantee the illusion. A sufficiency of non-doubled objects and people (things present but not 'speaking', like servants, the poor, and blacks, as well as chairs and chandeliers), a sufficiency which defined 'reality' in these films now gives way to a new sufficiency, that of the more elaborate casualness of real life, where objects have the appearance of having been used, and people of having a biography. This biography may not be spoken in the narrative, but it is there, spoken in their appearance and style of acting. This is at the root of Balcon's distinction: that the biography of a person has to be super-added to whatever actions they perform, this being precisely the craft of acting rather than of being. The *Evening Standard* reviewer perceived exactly the distinction between realisms. The studio's set manufacturers were still slightly behind this trend, still painting backdrops: in *Passport to Pimlico* the backdrop in certain studio scenes is still meant to be read as a shorthand sketch of what is outside, even though the lighting style is deliberately given the quality of a location shot. This is the 1930's attitude, to sketch a luxury against which the complexities of psychological narration take place. However, in this film the backdrop should not have been painted, it should rather have been a photograph like the Eiffel Tower scene in *The Lavender Hill Mob*. A new superfluity of information was needed, a social backdrop and not a psychological one; a different amount of non-doubled coding to support the fiction as real because it claims a different reality, a faithfulness to concrete social situations.

The way in which this was thought through further illuminates Ealing's film-making practices. The discussion of a project seems to have centred around the 'idea', the comic disruption it showed, or its message about humanity. Hamer's argument with Balcon about the cutting of *Kind Hearts and Coronets* is one example; another is Balcon's hindsight condemnation of his decision to allow Monja Danischewsky to make the musical comedy *The Love Lottery*, scripted by an American and starring David Niven. He says it was 'the transplanting of a Broadway type into an English atmosphere . . . an absolute complete and utter failure'. The questions asked about a project were whether it was convincing enough; whether it was a saleable genre or not. A community of ideas existed about cinematic language: there were no discussions of large-scale issues of cinematic style. But these issues were faced and discussed at

specific points in the making of films, and a large amount of teaching did go on within the group. Here Cavalcanti was particularly important. He was a Brazilian who had made several influential silent films in France, and later came to the GPO/Crown Film Unit in 1933. He joined Ealing in 1941 and stayed until 1947 as associate producer and occasional director (see the interview with him in *Screen* v 13 n 2, Summer 1972). Balcon counts him as a great influence because he knew the potential of film language (exemplified by his almost expressionist sequence for *Dead of Night*), and because he was a good teacher:

'I just don't know how he influenced people; but if he talked with someone like Dearden who was directing, somehow a different idea of a shot would emerge. It wasn't any schoolmastering way, he understood films and he talked films: he knew about them.'

The shared style which emerged from those years of development, when only Balcon and Cavalcanti had had any previous sustained experience of film-making, was a realism which tended almost deliberately to adopt flat camera angles, a neutrality of composition. Seth Holt's *Nowhere to Go* is, as he intended, 'the least Ealing film ever made' for this reason: it uses the spare, stylised images of a Losey. These images draw attention to themselves, they communicate something other than 'this is reality'. The intention of Ealing's film-makers, however, was to show the Real as naturally as possible; and in the comedies this meant that they could investigate disruptions within this reality.

10. Comedy

'Personally, I am very attracted by comedy, or rather by a certain kind of comedy. . . . It lets you do things that are too dangerous, or that a certain audience can't accept' (Alexander Mackendrick in *Positif* n 92, 1968).

Ealing's comedy, the kind of film with which the studio is most popularly identified, fits into this natural assumption of film as the language of the real. There seem to be two kinds of comedy: first that which is aware of language and works by deconstructing and recombining it, the comedy of gags, of illogicality and incongruity; and second that which rests on a natural language and instead deals with social disruption. The first is that of a Tashlin or a Chaplin, the second that of Ealing or of a Preston Sturges. The distinction cannot be rigidly maintained, as elements of each appear in the other: Ealing comedies all use various gags. Chaplin's comedies all had a social edge which the passage of time and idolatory has only served to blunt. But it is a distinction which is fruitful: Paul Willemen has convincingly demonstrated that Tashlin's films are 'intricate networks of quotes, parodies,

114 pastiches, satires' which function through the combination of elements by 'addition, subtraction, multiplication, juxtaposition, condensation etc'. He argues that the formal quality of these gags is their dominant feature; although the codes which are combined together are those of the normal social discourse, the way they are disrupted is more important than their social implications:

'A classification according to the type of combination is perhaps more fruitful in the case of Tashlin, because these procedures are dominant, and the combination of different codes is always secondary in this type of comedy. As far as this type of comedy goes, it is not of primary importance to note that speech, effects, music and image are being combined; these kinds of combination appear in almost all types of film. Comedy is generated principally by the type of combination used – illogical, incongruous, breaking the laws of verisimilitude etc' (*Frank Tashlin*, Edinburgh Festival 1973, p 125).

The kind of disruption of language identified with Tashlin is not present in Ealing work: there are hardly any gags like the one he contributed to the Marx Brothers' *Casablanca* where a cop finds Harpo leaning against a wall and asks sarcastically if he's propping the building up; Harpo nods, and when the cop angrily pulls him away, the building collapses. The nearest equivalent is the sequence in *The Lavender Hill Mob* where the gang melt down the gold and each shot of each action is accompanied by a radio news bulletin full of puns about gold/melting-down/towers/escape. Here, the whole gag submits to and furthers the logic of the narrative (on one level it is another way of disguising the massive temporal discontinuity involved). It is not enjoyed, in other words, for its demasking of language as the Tashlin gag is: there it has no narrative function whatsoever. Gags are used in the Ealing comedies in this way in order to show that they are comedy, so it is the films which seem most to evade this label (eg *The Man in the White Suit*) that have the most comic routines. Chase sequences function in a similar way, by expressing in its clearest form the basic tension of the film through a set of formal statements of challenge and escape, like the chaos the crooks cause in *The Lavender Hill Mob* by stealing the inspector's car for their get-away.

Ealing comedy rather belongs to the type which deals with the disruption of social reality, something that is often defined as the safe playing-out of 'base urges': the enactment of desires that are not socially sanctioned. This applies as much to hatreds and utopian desires as it does to sexuality: comedy is the space in which these motivations can be revealed and played through. This produces a disruption of the surface tranquillity of existence, and this disruption is sometimes expressed in the disruption of codes that produces laughter, in unexpected twists and logical incongruities etc. But the basis of this kind of comedy is the way in

which it deals with feelings which are not quite socially sanctioned. The outer edges of this space are defined by the limits of subversion: comedy which 'gets too close to the bone' is that which deals with desires which cannot be integrated. Then it transgresses into the area of the other, the area of experience which is totally excluded from civilisation at that particular moment. Comedy has to effect some kind of reconciliation between the desires it deals with and the society which these desires are disrupting; this at its weakest is the kind of integration that takes place at the end of *Some Like It Hot*, where Jack Lemmon in drag is being carried off to marriage by an ageing millionaire. Lemmon tells him 'But I'm not a woman'; the millionaire replies with a broad grin 'Well, nobody's perfect'. Here the then scatological theme of homosexuality is integrated on a personal level only. This is the most flimsy acceptance permitted; comedy is progressive in that it reveals the partially repressed areas, the areas of unease, tension, guilt, of potential change, but in the end it has to effect, in the reading preferred by the film-makers, some kind of re-integration. Yet this can be an uneasy confirmation of traditional values even within the preferred reading. In the readings of a corporate or oppositional class this integration can be lost or ignored.

Ealing's comedy does not deal with resentments or 'guilt' so much as with aspirations and utopian desires. It is not primarily concerned with satire, which can be identified with the playing out of class resentments, illustrated during 1940-9 by the films of Preston Sturges. Here, the central values of American society are torn apart from the point of view of those who do not succeed, the large majority of the working and lower middle classes. Hence in *Christmas in July* (1940), ambition is shown to succeed through a mixture of luck, bombast, self-centredness and other people's idiocy, as the naive and selfish Dick Powell is conned into believing his terrible slogan has won a contest. He then gets respect and material rewards where he had previously been snubbed, until he is found out. Then, he really wins the contest. . . . In *Sullivan's Travels* (1941) a director of lavish musicals wants to find out about 'real life' and systematically has his romantic preconceptions shattered by the degradation of brute poverty. He ends up in a chain gang, and just before he is rescued he goes to a film-show with the other convicts and finds that laughter at cartoon gags is their only release. He learns to take back his old place in society as entertainer: the ending confirms the established social order. But *en route*, life for the poor has been shown in a way that only a handful of Hollywood films (even from studios independent of the bankers) managed to do in the 1930's (eg *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*), very different from the weak populism of a film like *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940). Where Ford wanted to adulterate the starkness of the Steinbeck novel, Sturges, by using satirical comedy, could produce a film showing the inescapable logic of

116 poverty for the unemployed and semi-employed within the American system. This demonstrates exactly the space of comedy within fictional discourse. It allows a faithfulness to real conditions when these conditions are 'better off ignored' in the eyes of the dominant class; but this faithfulness is gained at the cost of reaffirming the system (economic and moral) which produced the situation. Nevertheless, it opens an area where a different self-recognition by these oppressed people themselves can take place.

Ealing does not deal with such resentments and class differences, whether expressed in satire or in slapstick (cf Chaplin's *Modern Times* etc). As Balcon says:

'I don't know that we were consciously influenced by anybody. If I can mention Chaplin in the same breath as Ealing, then I know that our approach to comedy was altogether different from his. . . . We were all tremendous filmgoers, but I don't think we were consciously influenced by what we saw; of course, we were tremendously impressed by Preston Sturges' work.'

Ealing's comedy style was new in that it dealt with the utopian desires of the lower middle class rather than its resentments. Certainly, resentment played a part in the working of the comedy ('Who hasn't wanted to kick the bureaucrat in the pants' wrote Balcon), but it was not its main emphasis. Rather this style dealt with the consequences of that resentment when it was played through; these consequences were the release of subterranean values. These values, and their playing-out in a specific area in a limited amount of time, constitute the 'fantasy', the affectionate 'whimsicality' often noted in the Ealing comedies. They are values which are felt to be lacking in lower-middle-class life, either denied or under historical pressure. The expression of these fringe values, the ideals of community which tend to be denied by the facts of a competitive, status-conscious middle-class life, produce the more progressive comedies. Hence in *Passport to Pimlico*, resentment about rationing produces an expression of the utopian desires for a self-regulating independent community; in *Whisky Galore*, it is the compensatory 'golden age' dream of an anarchic self-governing community before the arrival of the more individualistic present. These values are expressed through the disruption of the social order, a disruption that is made possible by certain resentments. Hence also the aspirations for a different class status are expressed, in *The Lavender Hill Mob* through robbery and in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* through murder. The more reactionary comedies spring from the regret for those ideals which are seen as being swept aside by the forces of history; it becomes a more nostalgic and sentimentalising comedy, best shown in *The Titfield Thunderbolt*.

The expression of these values is only possible because of an initial disruption – hence Balcon's definition of the comedies as

'real people in impossible situations'. Impossible not because they lead to stalemate, but because they cannot occur. The situation makes comedy possible, whether it be a sudden discovery that disrupts (*Passport to Pimlico*, *The Man in the White Suit*), or the encroachment of outside interests and powers (*Whisky Galore*, *The Titfield Thunderbolt*, *Barnacle Bill*). The result is what Durgnât and Balcon both call 'anarchistic', precisely because it expresses the shadowy desires and aspirations at the margins of bourgeois thought. This definition differentiates Ealing comedy from that of the Boulting brothers (who made *Lucky Jim* after Ealing rejected it). Balcon, making the comparison, says: 'Our comedies were done with affection . . . in a sense the Boulting comedy had a sharper edge to it, and was unkindier'. The Boultings tended to deal with satire and class conflict; Ealing dealt with aspirational, utopian comedy, and so substantively only with one class. The idea of affection links the impetus with the idea of the acceptable disruption of established beliefs and institutions. Balcon is firm about the limits of Ealing's willingness to show the shortcomings of the State or of morality: 'Barnacle Bill might defy the Whitehall planners, but Michael Balcon told Ken Tynan he could never make a film which profoundly criticised such British institutions as the army' (Raymond Durgnât: *A Mirror for England*, p 38). This is paralleled by T E B Clarke's account of how one night he was arrested for breaking in when he'd forgotten his key:

" "Says he wrote *The Blue Lamp*," the man on the beat concluded. . . . "Then aren't you the same one that wrote *The Lavender Hill Mob* – the film that takes the piss out of the police? " The frying pan had given way to the fire. I had to admit it. "Just a bit of good-humoured fun " I equivocated. "Now don't you play it down! – it was great. . . . It's a long time since I enjoyed a picture like that last one of yours. Just what was needed – somebody to take the piss out of the job! " I knew then I really had reason to feel proud, for I had not let my old force down ' (*op cit*, p 169).

This demonstrates exactly how little resentment was thought to be permissible amongst the studio staff, no matter how radical they might be in private. But from this kind of restriction a different kind of comedy was created, one which dealt more with aspirations, what the reviewers called 'fantasy'.

A multitude of logical incongruities are born from the initial disruptions that give rise to the comedies. The gags and routines are secondary to this, and as the comedies lose their social impetus (and a large part of their popularity) the gags become predominant, most obviously in *Who Done It*, a playing through of stereotyped slapstick situations. Mostly however, the comedy is born out of the complicated negotiations between the established order and the disruptive forces. This determines the diverse amusements of Holland suddenly thinking of himself as gangleader (*The Lavender*

118 *Hill Mob*); of Pemberton calling for law and order when he had explicitly rejected it only the night before (*Passport to Pimlico*); of Louis's cool justification of his multiple murders (*Kind Hearts and Coronets*); of the mutual incomprehension of the Scots and businessmen in *The Maggie* where neither can understand how the others can be so stupid, because they use different logics.'

The basis of the comedies lies in the way that they play out the fringe ideals and subterranean values of the class to whom their preferred meaning is directed. The comedies are, therefore, amusing rather than to be laughed at out loud. It is a fond amusement, the recognition of these utopian ideals and shadowy values when they are played out in a limited space. The disruption of the normal order is possible so long as its expression is always local, localised in a specific place for a specific length of time for a well-defined group of people. The recognition has to be within these limits for it to be acceptable and not too disturbing. But for audiences with a different class background from that of those whose sympathies lie with the preferred reading, these values and ideals have a different weight. They may already find a considerable degree of expression, as with the ideal of community, which is the normal mode of behaviour in an organic working-class community. The comedy then takes on a different character. It is no longer a comedy of fantasy but of fact; it is no longer a comedy in which, for a short time, recognition of the shadowy areas of belief can be expressed, but a comedy where normal ways of behaving are shown and are causing disruption and defiance of those who do not behave that way. So the weight of the defiance in *Passport to Pimlico* or *Whisky Galore* is very different for working-class and middle-class audiences. For one it is fantasy, whimsy; for the other it is an expression of real potential.

11. Social and Political Ideas

'By and large we were a group of liberal-minded, like-minded people. I don't know if anyone was terribly politically involved, we were film-makers: it was our life, it was our total life' (Balcon).

'Real people in real situations' is not simply proposing a certain kind of cinematic style, it is equally a social proposal: the people shown have to have convincing psychologies and belong to a recognisable class. A complicated set of ideas about both cinematic technique and social relevance is impacted into this one idea because it was not the habit of film-makers at this time to reflect overall about what they were doing. The issues were thought through in terms of an instinctual response to specific problems, so cinematic realism emerged as transparent precisely because it was not thought of as language, but as the efficient duplication of the real. The same process is found with social ideas. Balcon has

evident difficulty in thinking of the films in terms of their class position; he is much more used to seeing them in terms of the 'idea' they express, as shown in his interpretation of *The Man in the White Suit*: 119

'The relationships of management and labour are not dealt with in depth. It's more concerned with the question of processes, and the search for a synthetic substitute; it bears a relationship to that kind of research today.'

Mackendrick sees the film in more psychological terms:

'I'd like to make another "hysterical comedy" like *The Man in the White Suit* which is my favourite film. A man lives in a social group. This group seems normal and he abnormal. Little by little you realise that it is *he* who is full of good sense. In a psychotic world, neurotics sometimes seem normal' (interview in *Positif* n 92, 1968).

Similarly, T E B Clarke writes of *Passport to Pimlico* in terms of its comic idea rather than of the type of people involved (*op cit*, pp 159-61). The concern of the studio staff was to elaborate the entertainment rather than to give a social view. So the latter was not thought through consciously, it was a matter of what 'felt right', and what the staff sympathised with. Balcon gives a basic statement of their class position:

'If you think about Ealing at those times, we were a bundle . . . (I'm not saying this in any critical sense), we were middle-class people brought up with middle-class backgrounds and rather conventional educations. Though we were radical in our points of view, we did not want to tear down institutions: this was before the days of Marxism or Maoism or Lévi-Strauss or Marcuse. We were people of the immediate post-war generation, and we voted Labour for the first time after the war; this was our mild revolution. We had a great affection for British institutions: the comedies were done with affection, and I don't think we would have thought of tearing down institutions unless we had a blueprint for what we wanted to put in their place. Of course we wanted to improve them, or to use the cliché of today, to look for a more just society in the terms that we knew. The comedies were a mild protest, but not protests at anything more sinister than the regimentation of the times. I think we were going through a mildly euphoric period then; believing in ourselves and having some sense of, it sounds awful, of national pride.'

Elsewhere he has described his own background as 'Gladstonian liberal' from a 'respectable but impoverished family'. The idea of liberalism covers two related political tendencies, both of which are evident in Ealing's staff. The first is that of the nineteenth-century Liberal Party, an uneasy alliance of progressive political

120 forces, the backbone of whose support was the Nonconformist petty bourgeoisie. It was the party of peace, prosperity, free enterprise and decency. One of its basic tenets was tolerance, the ability to see both sides of the question, an attitude which informs the preferred reading of *The Man in the White Suit*. Growing from this during the twentieth century was the liberalism of the generation after Balcon's, that of most of the studio staff. They experienced early in adult life the effects of the depression and the rise of fascism. The reaction to these conditions amongst the liberal intelligentsia was a certain radicalism, a radicalism which had not developed during the earlier period of labour militancy immediately after the First World War. It was a radicalism born out of humanitarianism, a response to a failure of the system rather than a challenge to it. Its most concrete expression was a commitment to the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War: Ivor Montagu, Sid Cole and Thorold Dickinson were all in the unit which made *Behind the Spanish Lines* and *Spanish ABC* in 1938. Dickinson was also on the 1937 ACT delegation to Russia. The pro-Spanish-Republican spirit pervaded the GPO film unit, as Cavalcanti shows in the *Screen* interview (v 13, n 2, Summer 1972). The limits of this radicalism are demonstrated by the post-war careers of these people: there was an acute suspicion of the left as somehow dehumanised (the product of Stalinism), which led Dickinson to make *Secret People*, viciously condemning a group which attempts to assassinate a fascist dictator. It also leads to comments like Balcon's 'Ivor Montagu was a great character, no doubt a member of the Communist Party, but he was the sweetest, nicest, gentlest man that ever happened'. Balcon's own attitude to political affiliations is that they were none of his business so long as they stayed outside the studio:

'Mary Kessel used to sell the *Daily Worker*, but we had an arrangement with her that she would sell it outside the studio gate and not inside. This was the kind of atmosphere, it was much milder. There was Baynham Honri, our technical supervisor, and another technician, Eric Williams, who were arch-Tories, but the men used to pull their legs.'

Almost all of the studio staff had come from comfortable middle-class backgrounds, qualitatively different from the lower-middle-class one they portray. Many had had some form of higher education: Hamer, Clarke, Crichton and Frend at Oxbridge; Mackendrick and Relph at art colleges; Cornelius, from South Africa, went to Max Reinhardt's academy in Berlin and to the Sorbonne. Others were from theatrical backgrounds: Dearden, Holt, Relph. Most of them participated in the radicalisation of the intelligentsia in the 1930's, and voted Labour in 1945. There was certainly a more political atmosphere during the War; asked whether the senior staff participated in the swing from Labour in 1950, Balcon

replied: 'I wouldn't have been particularly conscious of it at that time. One was obviously conscious of it during the War because one talked of the world that one had to face in post-war times.' This radicalism consisted of a rejection of the anarchic capitalism identified with the depression in favour of a State-regulated system; also, in the arts, it leaned towards the portrayal of 'real people', a tendency marked in the cinema by a rejection of what Hollywood was supposed to stand for. But film-makers of this class background and with the demands of entertainment to fulfil conceived of 'the people' in a very distinct way, not as factory workers, an amorphous mass with whom they had little or no contact, but as that more public echelon of shopkeepers and clerks, the petty bourgeoisie. These were people who were easy to observe unobtrusively (Anderson recounts how they sat in the Soho café that was the model for the café in *Secret People* 'observing the clientele'), and were known to be familiar to the whole audience. But this in itself is not enough to explain the concentration on the petty bourgeoisie: it is also a concentration on the point of exchange rather than the place of production: as Charles Barr put it, 'the small catering establishment' is a 'social melting-pot' which occurs very frequently in British films (*Screen* v 15 n 1, Spring 1974, p 117). This is precisely because the point of exchange is the only point in capitalist society where social relationships are expressed. They are not expressed in production, because production itself appears to be like an exchange, of 'a fair day's work for a fair day's wage' etc. The relations of power and of privacy are thus only expressed in exchange:

'The reciprocal and all-sided dependence of individuals who are indifferent to one another forms their social connection. This social bond is expressed in *exchange value*, by means of which alone each individual's own activity or his product becomes an activity and a product for him; he must produce a general product – *exchange value*, or, the latter isolated for itself and individualised, money. On the other side, the power which each individual exercises over the activity of others or over social wealth exists in him as the owner of *exchange value*, of *money*. The individual carries his social power, as well as his bond with society, in his pocket' (Karl Marx: *The Grundrisse*, Penguin Books, pp 156-7).

This means that the only point in the social process at which individuality is fully expressed is at the point of exchange; to express psychology and to show individuals, entertainment will be biased towards this class and this area when it wants to show 'the people'. Unencumbered by such an impulse, it can go ahead and show those sections of society whose wealth makes it possible for them to develop their psychological processes to the full. This was the drift of Hollywood in the 1930's, a drift which Balcon and

122 others explicitly rejected because of the War. The multitude of difficulties in showing the process of work and maintaining the demands of entertainment and psychological development at the same time are well known. The only Ealing film to attempt this leans heavily on the moment of exchange for its justification: the stalemate in *The Man in the White Suit* that makes the invention unacceptable is the result of the endless circulation of exchange; if everlasting products were made, this system of always-expanding reproduction of need would be short-circuited. There would be nothing for the workers to do, and no more return on capital. In this film as well, although the setting is industrial, there is still no portrayal of workers working. The only work-process shown is the individualised process of bosses and researchers. Workers are not individuals in as much as their work deprives them of individuality and therefore of 'dramatic interest'.

Thus the concentration of Ealing's films on the lower middle class is a result of a complex of factors. The first is biographical: the majority of the film-makers were born into middle-class families, many strongly imbued with old-fashioned liberalism, which expressed the class interest of the emergent lower sections of the bourgeoisie. They were of the generation which passed through the depression and was radicalised by it, producing a desire to show 'the people' in films. Both personal knowledge and the demands of entertainment narratives confirmed them in the choice of this class fraction as the area of interest. The development of Ealing comedy is closely linked to the complex history of this class fraction since the War. Balcon agreed with the identification of this interest, but was extremely hesitant about calling it a conscious attitude:

'I suppose that we resented the fact that everybody had treated what you call the lower middle class as types; and I think we attempted to treat them, oddly enough, as human beings. . . . I think we probably found them easier to deal with.'

In *The 18th Brumaire*, Marx described the petty-bourgeois party in the French Assembly of 1849 as follows:

'Just as little must one imagine that the democratic representatives of the petty bourgeoisie are indeed all shopkeepers or enthusiastic champions of shopkeepers. According to their education and their individual position they may be as far apart as heaven from earth. What makes them representatives of the petty bourgeoisie is the fact that in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problems and solutions to which material interests and social position drive the latter practically. This is, in general, the relationship between the *political and literary representatives* of a class and the class they represent.'

In just the same way, the Ealing creative elite, themselves members of the middle echelons of the middle class, came to make films in sympathy with lowest strata of that class.

This sympathy is expressed in a certain moral attitude: 'Nothing would induce us to do anything against the public interest just for the sake of making money.' This is at once a personal and a political morality: it refuses any infringement of the national moral norm, or that moral norm which is assumed to be national, and at the same time refuses any contradiction of the demands of the state. No real revolution can be advocated, and no serious criticism of national institutions of power (judiciary, army, parliament etc), except that which is sanctioned by comedy. But it is in the role of women that Ealing's strict morality was and is most remarked upon. There have been many films which have seen the police as a natural force for good in society as do all Ealing films, but few studios that have consistently dealt with women in such a restrictive way. Most criticism of Ealing's morality, however, equates the role of women with that of sex, eg Bryan Forbes's 'Sex was buried with full military honours at Ealing' (*Evening Standard* review of *Hollywood, England*). But the matter of sexuality is only the most visible manifestation of the petty-bourgeois idea of femininity. Women are seen as the repositories of moral values, and it is therefore no accident that they are less in evidence in the comedies than in the serious dramas, as even Balcon will admit. Since comedy involves the infringement of ideals and accepted structures, it is possible for men to be involved, but not women. This is equally evident in matters of property as of sexuality. The robbery films (*The Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Ladykillers*) are remarkable for the lack of women: the old lady in *The Ladykillers* is the single exception, and her importance lies precisely in the way that she is inviolable, a moral absolute. Equally in *Whisky Galore* the women are marginal to the actions; in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* the action concerns Louis's prevarication over which woman he wants as his, or rather his attempts to possess both. It is the standard ploy of 'men act, women appear', a widespread attitude which is more a product of patriarchal than of capitalist society. But it is an attitude which has a different form in the different material and ethical fields in which it is expressed. So the petty-bourgeois ideal is that of the 'little woman', the woman who exists as an ignorant housekeeper and spiritual comfort. It is a matter of the particular way in which the separateness of work from home, and of the privacy of the home come to be dealt with. In short, it is a matter of the cultural space of a particular class fraction, and the available modes of subjectivity for women within it. As petty-bourgeois roles are defined in terms of a 'private life' rigidly isolated from social life, attitudes towards sexuality (the private acts at the heart of private life) best define the available range of attitudes. Not mentioning anything that goes on within

124 'the sanctity of marriage', anything of the details of either personal life or of sexuality, are attitudes more typical of a petty-bourgeois mentality.

Balcon has summed them up as follows:

'I have come to the conclusion that if, as it appears, there has been a sex deficiency in the films for which I have been responsible over the years, no great or permanent damage has been done, as current films are more than making up for lost time. It could be said that my films were also deficient in violence. But I reflect that there are many things in life other than sex and violence. There's love, for instance, but then I suppose if I bring up that absurd word I ought to define what I mean by it. I shall not attempt to do so, but merely say that what I mean by it is not very fashionable at the present time' (*Michael Balcon Presents . . .*, pp 265-6).

These attitudes are most rigidly evident in the family scenes of *The Magnet*. Yet at the same time, the scriptwriter of *The Magnet*, T E B Clarke, includes in his autobiography a number of dirty stories about his sexual exploits at Cambridge and elsewhere, stories which could never have appeared in Ealing films. Clarke's smutty stories are the obverse of Balcon's idolisation of women as emotional objects: both give women a subordinate or non-existent role in the sphere of action and intellect. Perhaps most revealing here is Clarke's account of how Margaret Rutherford got the role of the eccentric professor in *Passport to Pimlico*:

'We were upset by the news that Alistair Sim would not be available. Who else could be half as good in the role? After the names of a dozen actors had been put forward and discarded, Corny had a brilliant thought. Why must the character be a man? Why should Prof Hatton-Jones not be Margaret Rutherford?' (*op cit*, p 161).

This 'brilliant thought' was to regard a woman as capable of thinking intellectually, even in such an eccentric mould as this.

There is only space to give a schematic sketch of the preferred meanings of the individual comedies which emerged from this process, and of the historical location of those meanings.⁵ The history of the comedies is closely bound up with that of the lower middle class in this period (1946-57). The first group of the films released between February 1947 and November 1949 (*Hue and Cry*, *Passport to Pimlico*, *Whisky Galore*, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *A Run for Your Money*) are made in a period when the urban petty

5. A much more detailed account, including a historical reading of *Passport to Pimlico*, may be found in my MA thesis.

bourgeoisie was facing a new style of capitalism and state intervention after the experience of the War. During the War, they had some experience of running their own communities (the experiences of the Blitz and of the Air Raid Wardens who had to act autonomously underlies the declaration of independence by one street in *Passport to Pimlico*), and had participated in the general upsurge of radical feeling during 1941-2. They were now faced by an increasingly monopolistic capitalism, which was beginning to displace one of the forms of petty-bourgeois existence, the small shop or other enterprise. It was also abolishing the long-held distinctions between the labour aristocracy and the mass of the working class, thus eroding petty-bourgeois values in urban areas and amongst the working class. Along with this there was the tentative socialism of the 1945 Labour Government, which much increased state intervention and regulation of industry and commerce; but which, at the same time, had to revitalise British capitalism by a vast export drive, directly subsidised by preserving wartime restrictions and thus keeping the level of home consumption low.

In this context, the lower middle class had a lot to grumble about as well as certain remembered ways of fighting back, of active resistance. It is these forces which feed into the early comedies. *Hue and Cry* exploits a genre (gangster comics), but introduces a new class fraction and the disruptiveness of kids. *Passport to Pimlico* and *Whisky Galore* both deal with groups that revolt against the restrictions of rationing. In the first, a London street finds that it is in fact a part of the Duchy of Burgundy, so declares independence and freedom from rationing. The spivs invade; they are blockaded, and eventually a compromise is worked out with the British government. This is a direct rehearsal of the complaints and power of the lower middle class, as well as the limits of their differences from the dominant ideology at that point. It represents both an airing and a partial incorporation of the radical patriotism thrown up by the war experience. *Whisky Galore* deals with a more extreme move: the open defiance of British authority and the theft of rationed whisky by a self-sufficient community. This action therefore does not take place in a directly lower-middle-class situation: the revolt is that of a Scottish peasant community which expresses values at the fringes of middle-class experience, those of a group which co-operates rather than competes, and from which personal identity is drawn.

Kind Hearts and Coronets expresses, on one level, the aspirations for a higher class status, and poses the limits of the class system as shop-worker and Duke. In this system, it is the aristocracy that has the power, and uses it emptily, and the petty bourgeoisie who have the dynamism to keep the system alive. Louis tries to combine both. *A Run for Your Money* is a much less successful film, tangling together several narrative threads intended to demonstrate the positive openness of the Welsh miners against the various

The next three films were the products of changing historical circumstances. Rationing and state control relaxed and the consumerist society began to develop. At the same time came the Cold War, with the real threat of another world conflict. The Korean War caused a brief annual inflation rate of 11 per cent; it was a short period of gloom and despondency to which Ealing responded with three comedies: *The Magnet* (October 1950), *The Man in the White Suit* (August 1951) and *The Lavender Hill Mob* (June 1951). *The Magnet* shows the life of a middle-class boy afflicted by pangs of conscience, and the ludicrous interpretations put on this by his psychologist father. It was not successful: the retreat into the home was not so much at fault as the kind of home that was chosen. The family life was excessively privatised and repressed. *The Lavender Hill Mob*, on the other hand, was a great success: it used the stable formula of the robbery film and introduced into it two distinctively lower-middle-class characters, a clerk and a small manufacturer, as the villains. The robbery genre began to express real and legitimate social unrest and aspiration, avoiding the polarity of snivelling (working-class) petty crook and charismatic big gang leaders. *The Man in the White Suit* has already been discussed: its preferred reading is one of deadlock in British industry, a product of human stupidity.

After these films, the nature of the petty bourgeoisie and of its ideology began to change. The impact of the consumer society, with a brief boom after the Korean War and the development of the mass-consumer market with techniques such as advertising and HP not only drove a wedge between lower-middle-class and working-class interests, but also split the lower-middle-class fraction itself. Consumerism (a simple label for a complex historical phenomenon) offended certain traditional middle-class values: those of the taboo on pleasure, the saving ethic, and the privacy of home and family, areas which were extensively invaded by an aggressive consumerist capitalism. There have been two kinds of reaction: either a retreat into defensive suburban reaction (cf *Mary Whitehouse*), or an embrace of these new values, accepting and worrying at this new-style capitalism.

As the lower middle class and its ideology were in the process of change, Ealing's response was uncertain. The series of comedies made show few attempts to state the basic problems, and a general retreat into entertainment values. Two exceptions are *The Titfield Thunderbolt* (released March 1953) and *The Maggie* (February 1954). The first is a reactionary use of the idea of community, where the semi-feudal village rallies round to save its railway and to repel the forces of modern capitalism, variously represented by unions and monopolistic coach owners. This is clearly supported by the bourgeois myth of the country as a place 'free' from capitalist stresses. *The Maggie* again uses the *Whisky Galore* image

of rascally Scottish peasants, but pits them against a new-style neurotic American businessman. 'Americanisation' was a popular image for the process overtaking Britain in the 1950's, and its statement in this film avoids the crudities of a simple rejection or acceptance of peasant or business ideologies.

Other comedies were *Meet Mr Lucifer* (December 1953), *The Love Lottery* (February 1954), *Touch and Go* (October 1955), *The Ladykillers* (December 1955), *Who Done It?* (March 1956) and *Barnacle Bill* (November 1957, made at MGM). I have not seen *Touch and Go*; *The Love Lottery* was Ealing's only musical comedy, a satire on the grosser aspects of Hollywood star production and consumption. It was made at a time when the genre was at its least popular. *Meet Mr Lucifer* deals with the impact of TV in its early days, centring its critique around the idea that because so many friends invited themselves around to watch, the private sphere of the home was disrupted. This was 'a transitory phase in the spread of TV: its ubiquitousness soon began to reinforce the structure of the nuclear family. *The Ladykillers* and *Who Done It?* both exploit established genres and clichés, but very differently. *Who Done It?* plays through stereotypes of detective fiction and slapstick as a mere reiteration; *The Ladykillers* condenses the language of gangster genres (using several different 'types'), and then plays them off against another stereotype from elsewhere: the little old lady. *Barnacle Bill* is another aspect of this retreat into entertainment values: it revives Ealing's own formula of the lower-middle-class group against the power of authority, but it was by then a formula which had lost its social edge, especially when applied to the decayed aristocracy. The lower middle class were no longer engaged in that kind of conflict, and were profoundly divided over the issue of whether to preserve or move forward in a way which this film could not be used to express.

This has only outlined the preferred readings of these sixteen comedies; most of them have different working-class (and sometimes dominant) readings, readings which have to be explored before the texts are fully understood. Corporate working-class readings have been outlined for some of the comedies, but it is the purpose of this article to show how the preferred reading of a film must be established within the contradictions of the dominant ideology before these other readings can be fully understood. And this can only be done by looking at the production of the films, at where the accumulated determinants of industry, technology, organisation, technique and social attitudes coincide with and contradict the dominant ideology.

Edited by Alan Lovell

Walsh an Author?

Take a small book, issued in an edition of two thousand copies, written by a set of people whose names lack any of that inevitability which success and fame confer. An event which one would take to be of small importance and certainly not one which would attract the attention of mass circulation newspapers, let alone television. The book issued by the Edinburgh Film Festival to accompany their Raoul Walsh season last Autumn fulfils all the requirements of the opening sentence – yet it was vilified at length in most of the ‘quality’ newspapers and even achieved the distinction of being literally discarded on television by Barry Norman after he had spent five minutes of ‘prime time’ pouring scorn and ridicule on it. Such over-reaction, such an outpouring of affect, suggests that the book constituted some serious threat to things held very dear and very near by that group of people who constitute the opinion formers of our British film culture. It would take too long to investigate properly the nature of the threat and the reaction to it; the reading of cultural symptoms would take us too far afield. I will limit myself to a few remarks at the end of this review which might suggest how one would start that reading. Rather than dealing with the symptom I would like to deal with the rationalisations offered by those opinion formers for their outburst and examine them in relation to the book.

Before starting, and as I may seem rather critical of the texts I discuss, I would like to state plainly that the Walsh book is one of the most interesting and fertile books that has ever been produced on the cinema. The articles by Buscombe, Willemsen, and Cook and Johnston all open up absolutely vital new ways of trying to understand the cinema and, indeed, Willemsen’s text I am convinced will become a classic model of the analysis of a film.

The critic who most fully articulated the reasons for his dislike of the book was Nigel Andrews in the *Financial Times*, and I would like to take his objections as the starting point for this review. Basically they can be reduced to two. Firstly that the book was absolutely unsuited to fulfil its main function – that is,

to accompany the Walsh season and serve as an introduction to Walsh's films – and secondly that it is dedicated to a glorification of the director as author, who is thus turned into the Living God of the cinema. Both these points are in fact substantial ones and indeed they are inter-related. It is certainly true that the book is absolutely unsuitable as an introduction to Walsh. The articles are disparate – bound together by no real common concerns – despite the rather frantic attempt to link them by Phil Hardy in his introduction. But more than that, they are in parts quite needlessly difficult. Willemsen's text is probably the most striking example of this: a large number of Lacanian concepts are used in the analysis, with only the most elliptical explanations to introduce them. The problem of doing advanced theoretical work and yet at the same time attempting to make this work accessible to a wide audience is not an easy one to solve, but simply to avoid it is to lapse into a very dangerous intellectual elitism which will finally have a very damaging effect on the work itself being done. The practice of both Freud and Marx is exemplary here, where an effort to popularise and make available the results of their theoretical labours went hand in hand with those labours themselves. *Screen* itself is faced with this problem, and it would be generally agreed that it has yet to find an adequate solution. But difficulty may often be the product of a real theoretical problem which is being masked and covered over, and in the articles here presented that problem is undoubtedly the problem of the author. The book is presented as a set of essays on an individual director's films and the first article by Peter Lloyd is a traditional piece of author analysis. In this article's view, the works are produced autonomously by the author Walsh and the films are to be judged in terms of a certain coherence which the work attains – a coherence which is assessed in terms of the truth of that coherence in relation to the author's internal world or to the author's view of the external world. We have here the classic bourgeois view of art which has, hopefully, already been demolished by *Screen*. The author cannot produce his works autonomously because he can only work in a production situation which involves other people and in a set of social relationships, and his film cannot spring fully fledged from his head but must be articulated in a language of film which is no more created by him than it is created by any individual. The interest of film lies not in some mythical coherence but rather in the productive contradictions within the work (this is shown clearly in the book by the analyses of *Pursued* and *The Revolt of Mamie Stover*) and films cannot be judged in terms of truth – based as such a notion is on the film as representation or expression – but rather of the work that the film accomplishes on ideology and the positions it allows the viewer to take up.

If all the articles in the book were like Peter Lloyd's, Andrews's second criticism might be justified, but they are not. His failure to

130 perceive the utterly different problem of author that arises in the rest of the volume suggests a failure even to attempt to read it. If we do away with the author as a secular version of God, this does not mean that we can dispose of that awkward body (or, in films, bodies) which constitute the locus of discourses and practices within which the film is produced. Or rather we get rid of these bodies only at the price of falling into an abstract formalism. Paul Willemen's article provides an example of how such a formalism can become tempting. Willemen analyses the film *Pursued* in terms of the presentation and working out of a fantasy of the 'primal scene' – that event, real or imagined, in which the child observes his parents in the sexual act. Concentrating on certain areas of tension within the narrative structure, Willemen breaks down the narrative flow of the film to disengage a constant traversing of the problems of the Oedipal situation.

'Although *Pursued* contains rhetorical procedures to provoke an illusion of inexorable but smooth progression (eg the abundant use of dissolves for transitions, the overall circularity of the narrative constructions etc) the entire text is in fact one field of criss-crossing chains of semantic and expressive motifs, of permutations and shifts within one triadic structure on the model of the Oedipal situation, with most of the signs functioning simultaneously.'

It is beyond the scope of this review to follow fully the working out of this analysis; suffice to say that it is exemplary in its rigour and its determination that no element will be considered which is not overdetermined by its appearance at more than one level of the five matters of expression or its repetition on a given level. What, however, does constitute a problem is the location of the fantasy. Willemen writes:

'In the introductory sequence, Jeb is constituted as narrator, Thorley as narratee. However, by introducing these functions after the visual discourse has been going in the non-person for five or six shots, the question arises as to who was speaking before Jeb took possession of the narration, thus retroactively destroying the illusion of the non-person narration. As Jeb commences his first person narration, he constitutes himself as the subject of an utterance which in its turn is embedded in an utterance, the subject of which is seen as being present in the guise of a non-person. Jeb in this way functions as the *locum tenens* of the subject of the film discourse. All the reader knows about this subject is the series of letters spelling out the name of the organiser of the discourse, ie the name of the director as given in the credits, not to be confused with the interviewable person Mr Raoul Walsh' (pp 70-71).

But here Willemen is engaged in a theoretical sleight of hand – the subject of the discourse is not a set of letters but the body that upholds or supports the filmic chain of discourse – first the director (or those who construct the film) and then the viewer who traces the articulations as he watches and understands the film. There are thus two theoretical possibilities open to us. One, and this is the traditional Freudian approach, is to locate the fantasy firmly in the author and in his individual existence – it is this approach which leads to the ridiculous procedure of trying to explain texts in terms of supposed events within the author's life. The second possibility, which exists as a theoretical possibility, if not an actuality, is to locate the fantasy in the reader. Willemen hesitates between these two positions in an attempt to create a third alternative in which the fantasy would exist independently of material support as a structure with certain positions for the subject – which positions exist independently of the fantasy's site of production. Before trying to resolve this question let us see how the same problem arises in Edward Buscombe's article.

Buscombe is concerned to attack the conventional wisdom that 'by the beginning of the thirties Hollywood was totally in the hands of big business' (p 52). He shows, in a piece of historical analysis of the kind which, on a much larger scale, is indispensable for any Marxist theory of the cinema, that, in fact, Warners was not controlled by big business and that the relative radicalism of its films can be partially accounted for by this fact and the political preferences of Jack Warner. Buscombe points out that the existence of a house policy 'must call into question the simple notion of Walsh as an auteur who dictated the style and content of his pictures' (p 59), and he ends his piece with the following rather hesitant comment:

'If the tendency of these remarks is to make Walsh disappear behind the collective persona of Warner Brothers, this is not wholly the intention. The argument is not that Walsh brought nothing to his films, but only that working for a studio with as distinctive a policy and style as Warners imposed a number of constraints on any director. Yet these constraints should not be thought of as merely negative in their operation. Working for the studio meant simply that the possibilities for good work lay in certain directions rather than in others' (p 60).

Buscombe has raised a problem which he himself seems unable to answer. What is the relation between the individual body and the particular position that it occupies in the itself contradictory productive process? To suggest that the only relation is one of 'constraint' or the less perjorative 'direction' is to fall into a liberal view of the individual, whole and autonomous, moving freely within circumscribed areas laid down by society. Once again it is the author which creates a problem that can only be evaded by

Pam Cook and Claire Johnston's article comes nearest to providing the solution to Willemen and Buscombe's problem. At the end of their article, having rehearsed the arguments against the author, they state:

'A view of Walsh as the originating consciousness of the Walsh œuvre is, therefore, an ideological concept. To attribute such qualities as "virility" to Walsh is to foreclose the recognition of Walsh as subject within ideology. The feminist reading of the Walsh œuvre rejects any approach which would attempt to delineate the role of women in terms of the influence of ideology or sociology, as such an approach is merely a strategy to supplement auteur analysis. We have attempted to provide a reading of the Walsh œuvre which takes as its starting point Walsh as subject within ideology and, ultimately, the laws of the human order. What concerns us specifically is the delineation of the ideology of patriarchy – by which we mean the Law of the Father – within the text of the film' (p 107).

This then is the other answer to the problem of the author. Psycho-analytic tools can be used in the analysis of an author's work, but the work exists neither in some psychic vacuum nor in the unknowable details of the author's personal life, but is based and finds its support in the dominant symbolic orders – which can be identified through an attention to other artistic and social practices – and in those constant areas of pressure on the symbolic order which can be found repeating themselves in the subject's filmic discourses. Similarly the problem of the change of the author's position in the process of production should find its identification in certain changes in these repetitious forms of pressure.

Obviously this schematic formulation is easier stated than put into practice – the amount of work to be done is both of enormous quantity and of a very different kind than that heretofore carried out on the cinema. Literary examples are perhaps provided by Walter Benjamin's studies of Baudelaire (NLB, 1973) and Julia Kristeva's examination of Lautréamont and Mallarmé in *La révolution du langage poétique* (Seuil, 1974). The articles by Willemen, Buscombe, Johnston and Cook do, however, mark a very definite starting point for this work for film. But if Cook and Johnston produce the most correct account of the position of the author in the analysis of film and if, for the most part, their analysis of *The Revolt of Mamie Stover* is of a very high quality, their theoretical presuppositions about women in film suffer from a certain ambiguity throughout the article. For the authors a patriarchal society attempts to reduce women to signs in which male sexuality can be communicated and expressed. Talking of Marlene Dietrich in *Manpower*, the authors write:

' Marlene Dietrich is depicted as only having an existence within the discourse of men: she is " spoken ", she does not speak. As an object of exchange between men, a sign oscillating between the images of prostitute and mother figure, she represents the means by which men express their relationships with each other, the means through which they come to understand themselves and each other ' (p 85).

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The problem raised by such an analysis of women as signs is the confusion between how a patriarchal society wishes to represent women to itself and how women actually function within such a society. The danger is that an analysis of woman as sign will be accepted that entails the position that there is a definitely defined male sexuality which can simply find expression and also an already existent female sexuality which simply lacks expression. The article seems to hover between this position and a more complicated one in which women function as the repressed overdetermined moment of patriarchal society, constantly constituting a danger which would break the whole structure and allow another space to open up in which desire could find another scene on which to act. In part this ambiguity is the ambiguity of Walsh's own films, but the lack of a clear distinction between the attempt to make women function as sign and the reality of the 'trouble' that women cause within the patriarchal system constitutes a vacillation in the text. The result is that at certain moments a simple expressive notion is used as the criterion for a feminist criticism.

Hopefully, even this brief review has indicated the wealth of material in this small book and the extent and range of the theoretical question that is opened up. So why the outraged roar of pain and anger from those luminaries of British film culture? Two brief suggestions: (a) The position of the Barry Normans, Philip Jenkinsons *et al* is based on a division of labour. The scholars, academics and researchers turn up interesting pieces of information which the popular intellectual can select from in order to convey what the dumb pedant didn't have the wit to realise he was producing. The Walsh book is useless within such a division of labour — the facts and analyses being produced are very heavily dependent on the theoretical structure in which they are articulated. Thus a certain threat of a fall in profit makes itself felt as the earlier part of the process refuses to produce the raw materials necessary (cf the present battle between the producers of raw materials and the ' developed world ').

(b) The intellectual quality of the articles in the Walsh book and the concomitant work being produced in such journals as *Screen* and *Afterimage* raise a certain spectre over film studies. The real danger that film studies cannot be extricated from Freud or Marx, or rather (for Freud and Marx can always to a certain extent be academicised) from the real political struggles of the

134 present, constitutes a decisive threat to the liberal petty-bourgeois interest in film. In this respect it is interesting to note that the one article passed over in complete silence by the reviewers has been Cook and Johnston's. *Screen* may very well have a lesson to learn from this. A more active involvement with the actual areas of struggle in the cinema – particularly the increasing use of film as agit material – might be a method to ensure that our interest in Freud, Marx and Saussure cannot fall back into a recuperable academicism.

COLIN MACCABE.

Feminist Film Criticism: A Reply

I would like to follow up a number of issues raised in the piece by Christine Geraghty in 'Film Culture', *Screen* v 15 n 4, and to offer a further context for those issues.

The article reviews some of the recent developments in feminist film criticism and writing on the cinema, in particular issue 3/4 of *Women & Film*, a Californian journal of feminist film criticism, Claire Johnston's article in the *Screen* pamphlet *Notes on Women's Cinema*, and the Pam Cook and Claire Johnston article in the 1974 Edinburgh Film Festival book, *Raoul Walsh*.

Christine Geraghty's article seems to lack a certain dimension. The context for feminist film criticism is clearly political. Arising out of the struggle of the women's movement against male dominated structures in society, it is concerned to understand and describe how those structures, discerned and elaborated in a variety of writing by women, operate within art and the media and in particular within film. It is not simply a question, as Christine Geraghty says regarding *Women & Film*, of 'attacking male views of women as expressed in film', but of attacking oppressive representation of women in films, which are normally made by men. The oppression of such representations is now beginning to be articulated and described, as is shown in the quotations included in Christine Geraghty's article. The narrowness of the roles available to women in films; the paucity of films which centre on a female protagonist; the refusal to women of an independent sexual identity, and the use of women instead as sexual signifiers, sexual objects through which male sexuality is expressed and validated.

This is coupled with a re-evaluation of women's contribution to cinema, as film-makers and writers, and with a struggle to obtain control of the media, particularly through the making of films. This is not only because women desire to communicate with each other, but because it is a necessary strategy in the struggle against sexism that women-intervene in the area of the dissemination of ideology.

As Christine Geraghty rightly says, there are no easy answers as

to the relationship between art and ideology. It is in any case clear that the ideological content of films is mediated in a complex and indirect way. Claire Johnston in fact focusses on this problem in her essay in *Notes on Women's Cinema*, clearly placing film as an ideological product, in which not even the technology is neutral. Thus, as she says 'It is idealist mystification to believe that "truth" can be captured by the camera or that the conditions of a film's production (eg a film made collectively by women) can of itself reflect the conditions of its production . . . new meaning has to be *manufactured* within the text of the film'. Further, the sign is always a product: 'What the camera in fact grasps is the "natural" world of the dominant ideology. Women's cinema cannot afford such idealism; the "truth" of our oppression cannot be "captured" on celluloid with the "innocence" of the camera: it has to be constructed/manufactured'.

Nevertheless, ideology cannot be eliminated but can only be countered, as Claire Johnston suggests, through the creation of new meanings 'disrupting the fabric of the male bourgeois cinema within the text of the film'; a counter-cinema whose 'function is to struggle against the fantasies, ideologies and aesthetic devices of one cinema with its own antagonistic fantasies, ideologies and aesthetic devices' (Peter Wollen, *Afterimage* no 4, Autumn 1972). A counter-cinema not because it is created by 'someone who is oppressed' (Geraghty p 92), but through the articulation from a consciousness of oppression of a critique which is an interrogation of 'the language of the cinema/the depiction of reality . . . so that a break between ideology and text is effected'. It is from the position of counter-criticism that Claire Johnston looks at Arzner and Lupino, which is not to deny their differences, as Christine Geraghty suggests, but to foreground the nature of their (different) interventions as women film-makers in Hollywood cinema. Suggesting from this the development of strategies for a subversion of the workings of myth in Hollywood cinema through, in relation to Arzner, the use of crude stereotyping to generate within the text an internal criticism of it. Or, as with Lupino, in the way in which 'reverberations within the narrative, produced by the convergence of two irreconcilable strands - Hollywood myths of woman v the female perspective - cause a series of distortions within the very structure of the narrative'.

Hawks, Ford, Lupino and Varda *can* all 'present such different views of women' (Geraghty p 92) which does not negate the ideological nature of the technology (and techniques) of bourgeois cinema as Christine Geraghty suggests. Rather it arises precisely because, as Claire Johnston has argued, that bourgeois cinema can be challenged through the very mechanisms of its own working, through the myths it creates, by 'a dislocation between sexist ideology and the text of the film'. Which is surely the counter-cinema elaborated by Peter Wollen who, in referring to *Vent d'Est*

136 says 'In some respects this may bring it closer – or seem to bring it closer – to the cinema it opposes than *Vent d'Est* would suggest' (*Afterimage* no 4).

Claire Johnston's article in the arguing of its position remains speculative. Much more work needs to be done on the work of women film directors, and on the interaction of myth and 'signifying' structures (that is, between myths of women on the one hand, and the mode of production of meaning within a film on the other), and hopefully the forthcoming Dorothy Arzner season at the National Film Theatre will present an opportunity, particularly as a booklet on Arzner is planned to appear at the same time (to be published by the British Film Institute). Nevertheless a basis for such work is created in this article, which precisely attempts to confront the issues which as Christine Geraghty points out, are not explored in writing elsewhere.

But feminist film criticism has not remained static. It is useful to see the ways in which it has changed since *Women & Film* first appeared in 1972. At that time the force of feminist criticism was directed outwards and was, as Christine Geraghty points out, a description and indictment of women's roles in male-dominated cinema. Recently it has diverged and become more complex. The latest issue of *Women & Film* (no 5/6, 1974) deals almost exclusively with films made by women. This is a logical development, a result to some extent of women's film festivals where women have been able to see and discuss not only the films of the past but women's films now, made under the impact of the women's movement. As a result *Women & Film* has come to deal with the theory and practice of women's film-making, moving away from the 'consciousness-raising' analyses of images in men's films which Christine Geraghty criticises. In fact *Women & Film* has made an important contribution to the development of feminist study of the cinema by publishing filmographies, interviews and histories of women film-makers.

At the same time, Pam Cook and Claire Johnston's analysis of *The Revolt of Mamie Stover* is a development of feminist film criticism in dealing with the traditional male film. Rather than exposing sexism in such films as part of a 'consciousness-raising' of women (and men), they suggest a theoretical structure by which to understand *Mamie Stover*. Confronting the way in which traditional cinema is *per se* fetishistically structured, they use their analysis of *Mamie Stover* to write about the cinema itself. •

It is the nature of the function of female roles that is the centre of the Pam Cook and Claire Johnston article, 'The Place of Women in the Cinema of Raoul Walsh', where they are attempting to locate the status of 'Mamie Stover' as signifier in the film *Mamie Stover*. Films centering on female protagonists are rare, and *Mamie Stover* has been cited as one of these. Yet their analysis shows that in fact Mamie Stover is not the organising function of the

film, but rather a sign, an emptied sign (which links up to Barthes's notion of myth as connotator as used by Claire Johnston in her article: 'What was a complete sign consisting of a signifier plus a signified, becomes merely the signifier of a new signified, which subtly usurps the place of the original denotation'). Expressing not woman herself, but a play of male desires and conflicts concerning the placing of man within the patriarchal order (the Law), the film uses the myth of the powerful woman (Mamie's personality, her 'look' and her success in making money) who seems to possess the phallus (the locus of power within the patriarchal society) but who in fact is shown only to *be* the phallus (the fetishisation of women). Within this woman as *person* (that is, as a whole sign where 'woman' is denoted as such, rather than being the signifier within another signification in which 'woman' is always connoted) is 'impotent'. Man is released from the threat of castration, and Mamie must divest herself of all that made her such a threat (the return home, in the same clothes she left in, the single suitcase) in order to reaffirm male dominance.

Thus as Pam Cook and Claire Johnston write, Mamie isn't sexual, but only an image of sexuality; though she is the seeming protagonist of the film, she cannot write her own story, and must submit at the end to the disbelief of the policeman at the dock, because, as a woman, how could she have 'made a fortune and given it away'. Male dominance is re-asserted even in the face, particularly in the face, of the male-constructed castrating image of woman. (Cf the interview with Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen on their film *Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons*, *Screen* v 14 n 3.) The film is in fact not about Mamie Stover, but about Richard Egan's successful rejection of her, which acts for all men as an assertion of their own 'possession of the phallus', which in the film Mamie is brought to accept and embrace as justified, discarding her desire to make money (have power, like men) in favour of 'finding her real self', back home in Leesburg, Mississippi. Pam Cook and Claire Johnston use Lacanian notions of the Symbolic, the Real, the Imaginary, the Law of the Father etc as a grid through which they understand the textual gaps, the absences of the film. What is important is not their revelation of the 'image' of Mamie Stover as yet again a passive (emptied sign) agent for the working out of male conflicts etc, but their placing of the filmic narrative, the diegesis as a structure within which women must play certain roles, not because of ideological prejudice, but because the resolution of the diegesis depends on it.

That Mamie Stover is shown finally as having 'failed' is not so much a reflection of reality as a construction of a desired reality, the resolution in fiction of what remains in reality an ever-present threat and conflict – castration. Thus the pleasure of the film (as of most) is the resolution in fantasy of what remains a conflict in reality. Films, so long as they are operating within the masculine,

138 fetishistic structure, can never present alternative images of women (as being powerful, innovative, creative, authoritative) without subverting this image at its conclusion. Showing her as a failure as a woman, unable to keep a husband, without children, a 'home'; or else showing her seduced by the ('natural') desire for these into giving up her independence (Power) for a man. Indeed, in *Mamie Stover* she gives these up not for a man (Richard Egan has rejected her because of her phallic-ness) but for the possibility of having a man.

(See also in relation to this last point, Elizabeth Dalton's article 'Women at Work: Warners in the Thirties' in *Velvet Light Trap* no 6. She quotes Rosalind Russell, who played at least twenty career-women roles at various studios: 'Except for different leading men and a switch in title and pompadour, they were all stamped out of the same Alice in Careerland. The script always called for a leading lady somewhere in the 30's, tall, brittle, not too sexy. My wardrobe had a set pattern, a tan suit, a grey suit, a beige suit, and then a negligee for the seventh reel, near the end, when I would admit to my best friend that what I really wanted was to become a dear little housewife.'))

Images are not only the visual representations but the total representations created in a film, through the interaction of the visual with the diegetic which provides a content for the reading of the visual. The visual image is already heavily ideologically implicated. Lighting, camera angles, the cutting between actors and use of close shot v long shot – all the techniques of 'filming' – are used to differentiate radically the presentation of men and women on the screen. This is pointed up, for example, in the Warhol/Morrissey films where there is an almost exclusive transference to the male actors of techniques normally used only for women in films. Techniques which essentially produce a specularly in relation to the character in a way which places her role in the film as iconic rather than diegetic; ie the classical sexual objectification of women in films.

Through the emphasis on the iconic, women's roles become far more open to stereotyping than men's roles in film. In her discussion of Erwin Panofsky's theory of the development of iconography and stereotypes in the cinema, Claire Johnston (*Notes on Women's Cinema*, p 24) says 'As the cinema developed, the stereotyping of man was increasingly interpreted as contravening the realisation of the notion of "character".' But for women this was not the case. It is thus not a question of the evasion by men of stereotyping 'in the interests of realism' (Geraghty p 91) but rather that the stereotyping of images of women has become a cinematic convention connoting 'realism'.

It is in this context that the demand for alternative images of women in film is important. Both as polemic in relation to the degrading and 'negative' images available in the media at present,

and because as Claire Johnston writes in her introduction to *Notes on Women's Cinema* in terms of the development of such alternative images: '(Naome Gilbert's) study of the emerging culture heroine is interesting precisely because it examines the textual and narrative reverberations which result from the displacement of point of view which the women's cinema involves'.

ELIZABETH COWIE.

Television Studies

Discussion of television in Britain has been low level and restricted. Criticism of programmes has been written from a stance created out of that mixture of journalism and *belles lettres* that has dominated and crippled so much criticism of the arts, especially film criticism (though even film criticism, with all its limitations, has not managed to produce the combination of egotism, pretension and triviality that Clive James offers as television criticism in *The Observer*). The more general discussion of television has been limited by a preoccupation with investigating the effects on audiences or by narrow social and aesthetic perspectives.

Recently there have been indications that the situation is changing. The first two pamphlets in the new British Film Institute series on television, *Structures of Television* by Nicholas Garnham and *Light Entertainment* by Richard Dyer, as well as *Television: technology and cultural form* (Fontana) by Raymond Williams all contribute something to making the discussion of television more substantial. Both Nicholas Garnham and Raymond Williams extend the political and social limits of that discussion by not accepting the conventional estimate that British television is pretty much the best in the world as a given of the debate, and by situating their respective discussion of institutional forms and the relationship of technology to cultural forms within a specific political situation.

Raymond Williams' essay with its focus on the role of technology in the development of television is of particular interest when related to recent discussions of the role of technology in the development of the cinema (see Patrick Ogle's article on the emergence of deep focus cinematography in the United States, together with Christopher Williams' comment on it, in *Screen* v 13 n 1, Spring 1972 and Jean Louis Comolli's series of articles on technique and ideology in *Cahiers du cinéma* May/June 1971, July 1971, August/September 1971 and November 1971 — available in translation from the BFI's Educational Advisory Service). Williams' account with its analysis of an interplay of scientific, political, social and aesthetic factors seriously challenges Comolli's more unilateral account of technological development as a determined instrument of bourgeois domination.

140 Nicholas Garnham and Raymond Williams both write about television from inside a framework that stresses the role ideology plays in maintaining the political status quo. Television is seen as one of the principal carriers/expressers of the dominant ideology. Garnham is quite clear about this. Referring to Marx's well known claim that social being determines consciousness he says: 'The new emphasis on communication reverses this hierarchy, so that ideology becomes the main weapon of oppression and carriers of ideology such as the mass media become an important political battleground.'

Williams does not express his political assumptions so overtly in his essay but the position that can be deduced from it, while undoubtedly a more nuanced one, seems close to Garnham's. His concluding discussion of the likely effects of contemporary technological development best indicates this. The possibility of a '1984' situation is offered:

'We could have inexpensive, locally based, yet internationally extended television systems, making possible communication and information sharing on a scale that not long ago would have seemed utopian. These are the contemporary tools of the long revolution towards an educated and participatory democracy and the recovery of effective communication in complex urban and industrial societies. But they are also the tools of what would be, in context, a short and successful counter-revolution, in which under the cover of talk about choice and competition, a few para-national corporations with their attendant states and agencies could reach farther into our lives at every level from news to psycho-drama, until individual and collective response to many different kinds of experience and problem became almost limited to choice between their programmed possibilities.'

The central political position that is given to ideology and the way it operates in contemporary industrialised societies raises a number of large issues. In the immediate terms of television criticism, it leads to a preoccupation with one area of television programmes, the news area, 'since this is where ideology is most apparently at work. Williams does make the interesting suggestion that the unit of television criticism should be an evening's programmes seen as a continuous flow rather than the individual programme seen as separate and self-contained, but his most detailed discussion centres on news programmes.

The area of television that comes under the broad heading of entertainment and art is inevitably neglected. Since this area both makes up the major part of most television services' output and is generally more popular with audiences than the news area, the neglect is damaging though it is easy to understand why it occurs. Entertainment and art programmes don't normally have an overt ideological function and consideration of their ideological dimen-

sion is complicated by questions of aesthetic conventions, the relationship between ideology and pleasure, etc. 141

Richard Dyer's essay on light entertainment is particularly attractive in this context. Basically he starts from a social, psychological perspective which allows light entertainment programmes an authenticity: 'Shows are entertaining because they assert against the unpleasantness of reality certain hopes and ideals for humanity, because they give pleasure by making the audience feel what those ideals *would be like* if they were realised.'

This allows him to explain the general popularity of such programmes. But his awareness of the ideological situation in which these programmes are produced prevents him from taking them only at face value. This ambivalent attitude encourages a critical and sympathetic way of writing that avoids the puritanical heaviness or the camp flippancy that have been characteristic of discussion in this area. Given its brevity the essay is inevitably sketchy and suggestive rather than substantial, but it points towards a television criticism that is ideologically aware but not limited by that awareness.

ALAN LOVELL.

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Eisenstein's Epistemology: A Response from David Bordwell

This is by way of briefly developing some points touched upon in Ben Brewster's Editorial Note to my article, 'Eisenstein's Epistemological Shift' in *Screen* v 15 n 4, Winter 1974/75. Our disagreement centres upon Eisenstein's use of the term 'inner speech' in his post-1930 writings. Brewster assumes this to be a transference from its use in the work of Vygotsky (and, by implication, Eikhenbaum); ie, as internalised social speech, rightly described by Brewster as 'a specialised variant of ordinary communicative language'. My essay, however, assumed that Eisenstein's use of the term 'inner speech' applies instead to a non-verbal psychic associationism underlying all behaviour, including language. I want here to clarify some reasons for taking the latter as Eisenstein's point.

First, Eisenstein's most thorough exposition of his later theory's epistemology, 'Word and Image' (1938) rests squarely upon associationist premises. Brewster's connection of Eisenstein's example of the remembering of 'five o'clock' to the French phrase *le five o'clock* seems an unwarranted extrapolation and, anyhow, Eisenstein's other examples (his recalling '42nd Street' and 'the fateful midnight hour') cannot be so easily linked to vernacular usage. Furthermore, Eisenstein's account of concept-formation here is plainly a private associationism, and though his 'inner speech' may manifest itself in communicative behaviour, it logically need not. Indeed, Eisenstein's mixing of examples from literature and unverballed recollections serves further to suggest that for him inner speech is logically independent of verbal discourse. Thus this account seems to me to fit Wittgenstein's definition of private language as 'the language which describes my experiences and which only I myself can understand' (*Philosophical Investigations* section 256).

Second, Brewster cites the essay-lecture 'Film Form: New Problems' to show Eisenstein's debt to Vygotsky, but I do not see that this essay supports his point. It is true that Eisenstein mentions the Moscow Neuro-Surgical Clinic, but Vygotsky and Luria

remain un-named (curious in itself in a speech full of references to Lavater, Plekhanov, Lévy-Bruhl, Spencer and others). More important, I cannot see that Eisenstein here shows any awareness of the necessarily verbal underpinnings of inner speech in Vygotsky's sense. Indeed, examples which Eisenstein draws from primitive cultures suggest that his notion of inner speech is independent of language. First, he points to a basic rule of decorum or unity as manifested in the Polynesian custom of opening gates, untying knots, etc, when a woman is in labour. No verbal behaviour is included in the list, and Eisenstein plainly intends us to see here some homology between thought and culture altogether unmediated by language. Another instance is also revealing. Eisenstein notes that some cultures transgress the principle of self-identity (eg, as manifested in a phrase like 'I am not I'). Here we have psychic activity which contradicts not only formal logic but social speech: in describing Bororo Indians' belief that they are at once human beings and parakeets, Eisenstein stresses that 'It is not here a matter of identity of names or relationships; they mean a complete simultaneous identity of both' (*Film Form*, 135-136). Thus by a pure abstraction of structure, Eisenstein distinguishes inner speech from language: 'We are dealing here not with specific methods, peculiar to this or that art-medium, but first and foremost with a specific course and condition of embodied thinking – with sensual thinking, for which a given structure is a law' (134). Instead of Vygotsky's internalised social speech, Eisenstein posits a process of 'sensuous thought' which may manifest itself in a variety of external behaviour patterns.

There are still other reasons for identifying Eisenstein's 'inner speech' with an empiricist associationism. The later theory's dependence upon 'mental images' is less plausibly attributed to Vygotsky than to the Symbolist critic Andrej Belyj, whose analysis of literary imagery exercised a great influence over Eisenstein's thinking in the late 1930's. Moreover, on this account, the differences I discussed between *October* and *Ivan the Terrible* still seem functional, plot or no plot, solely on stylistic grounds: the former's style can be seen as operating via dialectical oppositions, the latter's via associationist linking of feelings. In sum, Brewster's remarks hold good for Vygotsky's position on 'inner speech', but I was not discussing Vygotsky's position. I believe that Eisenstein's theory takes little more than the term from Vygotsky. For Vygotsky, inner speech is a subset of social speech, while for Eisenstein social speech (and art) is a subset of a psychic associationism he calls 'inner speech'. (In the original essay, incidentally, I had used an over-cautious 'perhaps' in mentioning Eisenstein's debts to Vygotsky, but this was excised in the published text.) This is not to deny, of course, that Vygotsky's work also promises important applications to film, as Brewster's and other essays in the same number of *Screen* copiously illustrate.